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WORKS

OF

NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

LATE

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FRANKLIN, MASS.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

EDITED BY JACOB IDE, D. D.

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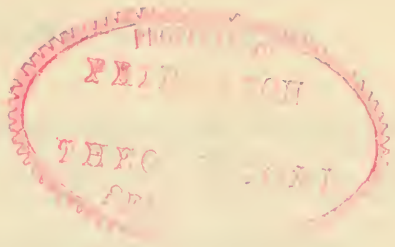

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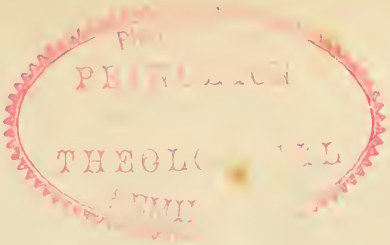

SERMON I.

THE SUPREME BEING THE ONLY PROPER OBJECT OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God. — Revelations, xix. 10.

The apostle tells us in the beginning of this chapter, that he had a vision of heaven, where "he heard a voice which came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." The apostle, it seems, supposed that the person, who had been revealing to him the future glory and prosperity of the church, was Christ himself in his glorified state. Accordingly, in a transport of joy and gratitude, "he fell at his feet to worship him." But the person perceiving his mistake, justly reproved him for his well intended, but misapplied worship. "See thou do it not. I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." This was as much as to say, "I am a mere creature, and, though of the angelic order, yet thine equal in office. I am appointed to deliver these messages of God to thee, as thou art to deliver the same messages to thy fellow men; and, in this respect, we are brethren and fellow servants, and neither of us is a proper object of religious worship, which is due to the

Supreme Being alone: Worship God." The plain and full import of the text is,

That God is the only proper object of religious worship.

This is the important point, which I shall endeavor to establish in the present discourse. This will appear, if we consider,

I. That the scripture represents God as the only proper object of religious worship. God directed Moses to say to his people, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." David taught the same doctrine that Moses did. He said, "The Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Here David represents God as the Creator, and as above all other beings who had been worshipped in any part of the world; and requires his people to give unto the true God that religious and supreme worship and glory, which are due to him alone. God says himself, "I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." And our Saviour said to Satan, one of the greatest of created beings, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." I might cite a great many more passages of scripture of the same import; but all who have read the Bible know that the inspired writers uniformly represent God as the only proper object of religious worship. This will farther appear, if we consider,

II. The absolute supremacy of God, in all his great and essential attributes. David represents him as worthy of the highest homage on account of his absolute supremacy. He says, "The Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." The Creator of all things must be the Supreme Being; and the Supreme Being must be the only proper object of religious worship. Here then it seems necessary to observe,

1. That God is supreme in respect to his existence. He assumes a name expressive of his peculiar existence. When Moses desired to know by what name he chose to be made known to his people, he said, "I am that I am: and thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you." This name denotes the most absolute and perfect existence. God is the first of all beings, and of consequence has an underived existence. There was nothing in the universe that existed before him, which could be the cause of his existence. This is peculiar to God and is not true of any other beings; for they all have a derived existence. There was an antecedent cause of their existing, and had not that cause operated they never would have existed. But there was no antecedent cause of God's existence. He exists by an absolute necessity of his own nature. The ground or reason of his existence is completely within himself; so that he is properly an underived and self existent being. As he did not derive his existence from any other being, so he is not in the least degree dependent upon any other being, whether he shall exist or not. As no being gave him his existence, so no being can take it away. Hence he is so often called the living, and only living God. He has an underived and independent life, which is peculiar to himself. All other beings have a derived and dependent life. He who gave them their life can at any time take it away. But God is the King Immortal. He has life in himself, which no being in the universe can destroy. As God's existence is underived and independent, so it is necessarily eternal. We cannot conceive of his ever beginning to exist, for the plain reason that he had no exterior cause of his existence. Accordingly the Psalmist addresses him as an eternal being. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, and the world; even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." He is also immutable, as well as eternal, in his existence. He claims immutability as his highest prerogative. He says, "I am the Lord, I change not." And the apostle James calls him "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Thus God is infinitely above all his creatures, in respect to his underived, independent, eternal and immutable existence.

2. God infinitely surpasses all other beings in the immensity of his presence. Though his presence be not properly extended, yet it fills all places and pervades all things, at one and the same moment. He is really as present in one part of his vast dominions as in another, and at one time as at another. He claims immensity of presence, as one of his essential attributes. "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the

earth is my footstool. Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Solomon addressed him at the dedication of the temple as omnipresent. "Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house I have builded?" We cannot conceive that God, who made, and who preserves and governs all things, should be limited in his presence, or be absent a single moment, from any place, or creature, or object, in the whole circle of creation. Omnipresence, therefore, appears to be an essential attribute of the Deity, which is peculiar to himself, and which renders him infinitely different from and superior to all created beings, whose presence is circumscribed by time and place.

3. God as far transcends all other beings in his knowledge, as in his presence. His knowledge is beyond all comparison in its kind and extent. Whatever he knows, he knows intuitively. He sees through all objects, and looks directly into all hearts. He knows the views and feelings and internal exercises of angels and men, before they are expressed in their words or actions. He makes use of no means of gaining knowledge, but has a direct, immediate, and universal knowledge of all things, which is peculiar to himself and belongs to no other being. He seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart. This is that kind of knowledge which David said was too wonderful and too high for him, and to which he could not attain. The apostle says, "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." He knows not only all things that have existed and will exist, but all things that might have existed. His knowledge is far more extensive than the knowledge of all other beings now is, or ever will be. Though their knowledge will be for ever increasing, yet it will be for ever limited; but his knowledge always has been, and always will be, universal and unbounded. So that his knowledge as far surpasses theirs, as eternity surpasses time in duration.

4. God is absolutely supreme in wisdom, as well as in knowledge. Though wisdom implies knowledge, yet knowledge does not imply wisdom. Knowledge is the bare perception of things; but wisdom consists in devising and forming the best designs, or in applying knowledge to the best advantage. Perfect knowledge is necessary to perfect wisdom. It would have been impossible for God to have formed the most perfect plan of operation from eternity, if he had not possessed a clear, intuitive, and comprehensive knowledge of all things possible. The least defect in knowledge might have proved a defect in

wisdom, and prevented the absolute perfection of his original and eternal purpose in the work of creation. But there was no defect in his knowledge, nor consequently in his wisdom. With a clear view of all things, he was able to devise the best possible design, and the best possible means to accomplish it. His wisdom, therefore, surpasses the wisdom of all other beings. He is the only wise God, or the only being who is perfectly wise. Moses says, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect." David exclaims, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." Paul speaks of the wisdom of God in the highest terms of admiration. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And he represents him as displaying to the view of the whole intelligent creation his manifold wisdom, in the plan of redemption through the mediation of Christ. The wisdom of men and of angels is but mere folly in comparison with the unsearchable and incomprehensible wisdom of the Supreme Being.

5. God is supreme in power, as well as in wisdom and knowledge. His power is the most prominent perfection of his nature, and the most visibly impressed upon all his works of creation and providence. But it is his creating power, that most clearly and infinitely surpasses the power of all created beings, who in this respect are entirely impotent. Neither men, nor angels, can give existence to the least thing conceivable. They can only move and modify created objects, but are wholly incapable of creating a single mote or atom. Indeed, all the power they have to do any thing, they constantly derive from the almighty power of God, who essentially comprehends, or comprises all the power there is in the universe. In him all other beings live, and move, and have their being. They are not sufficient of themselves, to exist, to speak, to act, or even think. And with all their derived power, they soon become weak and weary, and unable to act; but "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." He is able to operate through the whole circle of creation, and to produce millions and millions of effects, without the least interruption, or a moment's cessation. His power is underived, independent, and absolutely supreme. Farthermore,

6. God is supremely excellent in his holiness, goodness or benevolence. I use all these terms to denote his moral perfections, which are all comprised in his pure, disinterested, impartial, universal love. God is love. His whole moral excellence consists in holy love; and every moral attribute of his nature is

only a modification of perfect benevolence and good will to all percipient beings. But if this be the holiness of the Deity, some may be ready to ask, how does it appear that his holiness is infinitely superior to the holiness of all other beings? Does not God require all his intelligent creatures to be holy as he is holy? Are not angels and glorified spirits completely holy? And do not all good men feel and express pure benevolence, and exercise the same kind of holiness that God feels and expresses? This is all true; and yet there is a vast difference between the holiness of God, and the holiness of all other beings. We are told, "There is none holy as the Lord." And Christ says, "There is none good but one, that is God." The goodness of God far surpasses the goodness of all other beings, not only because it is underived, but because it is infinitely greater. There is more goodness in one benevolent exercise of God, than in all the benevolent exercises of all other holy beings united. Their goodness is limited by their views, which are extremely imperfect. They never take in but a very small part of the universe at one view; and their benevolent affections can extend no farther than their views. And though their views will be eternally extending, yet they will for ever fall infinitely short of the all comprehensive views of God. So that all their views to eternity will be infinitely inferior to the constant and unbounded views of the Deity; and, of consequence, all their holy exercises will be infinitely inferior in point of extent, and of real virtue and excellence, to his constant and unlimited exercises. The whole universe stands perpetually transparent to his view, and he aims at the highest good of the whole in every volition of his will, and every exertion of his hand. If we only reflect a moment upon the greatness of God, we must have a clear conviction of his supreme goodness. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. His all comprehensive views are never obstructed, and his benevolent affections are never diminished; and, therefore, he exercises more holiness every moment, than all holy creatures ever have exercised, or ever will exercise to all eternity. Thus God is absolutely supreme in all his natural and moral perfections; and this absolute supremacy over all his intelligent creatures, renders him the only proper object of their religious worship.

This leads me to observe,

III. That it is absurd to pay religious worship to any being who is not possessed of the essential attributes of divinity. It is absurd to love a being supremely who is not supremely amiable; or to place supreme dependence upon a being who is not supremely independent; or to yield supreme submission to a being who is not supremely wise; or to put supreme confidence

in a being who is not supremely good; or to make supplication to a being who is not every where present, and able to hear, and answer all the supplications of all who pray to him. But there is no being in the universe besides God, who does possess these essential attributes of divinity, which render him worthy of that supreme love, dependence, submission and confidence, which is expressed in prayer or praise, or in any other act of religious worship. This has been the universal opinion of all mankind in all ages of the world. They have never paid religious worship to any being whom they did not acknowledge to be a Deity, and possessed of divine attributes. Though some have worshipped the sun, yet they always meant to direct their worship to the divinity that they supposed dwelt in it. Though some have worshipped an animal, yet they always meant to direct their worship to the divinity that they supposed dwelt in it. And though some have worshipped graven images or dumb idols, yet they have always meant to direct their worship to the divinity that they supposed dwelt in them, or were always present with them. All their worship was divine worship, and intentionally paid to a divine being, possessed of the essential attributes of divinity. But they were grossly deceived in imagining that there were "gods many and lords many." For we have no evidence from scripture, or from reason, that there is, or can be, more than one living and true God; who is possessed of absolute independence, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and unlimited wisdom and goodness; and who is worthy of that supreme love, homage, veneration and confidence, which is always implied in religious worship. All other beings, except the eternal, self existent, independent, immutable, almighty and all wise Creator, are absolutely dependent upon him for their existence, and for all their rational and moral powers; and this dependence places them infinitely below him. There is no comparison between a created and an uncreated being. One created being is as completely destitute of every divine attribute as another. Angels are as destitute of every divine attribute as men; and men are as destitute of every divine attribute as lifeless matter. There is but one, and there can be but one being in the universe, who is the proper object of religious worship; and that being is the only living and true God. Accordingly, the scripture requires us to worship him, and forbids us to worship any other being.

I now proceed to the improvement of the subject.

1. If God be worthy of religious worship solely on account of the essential attributes of his nature, then he cannot form a being worthy of religious worship. He has indeed created beings superior to men; and he can undoubtedly create beings

superior to Gabriel, or any of the principalities and powers above. But supposing that he should create a being as far superior to Gabriel, as Gabriel is superior to the lowest of the human race; still that being would approach no nearer to divinity than the smallest intelligent creature. Or suppose he should create a being who should have a thousand fold more power, more knowledge, more wisdom, and more goodness, than the whole intelligent creation have now, or ever will have; still that being would approach no nearer divinity than the smallest insect. Or suppose, once more, that God should exert his whole omnipotence to form a creature as great and good as possible, still, that greatest and best possible creature would be infinitely below his Creator, in respect to both natural and moral excellence. For it is not conceivable that even omnipotence can create an eternal, self existent, independent, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, or infinitely wise and holy being. Or, in fewer words, we cannot conceive that God can communicate any of his essential perfections to a created being, and make him a Deity. But, if he cannot create a being equal to himself, then he must remain the Supreme Being, and infinitely worthy of that religious worship which is an explicit acknowledgment of his absolute supremacy, and which cannot, without denying his supremacy, be paid to any created being who is absolutely dependent upon him, and infinitely below him, in all respects. We have, therefore, the same demonstrative evidence that God cannot create a being who is worthy of religious worship, that we have of his being the Creator, Preserver, and Supreme Sovereign of the universe.

2. If God be the only proper object of religious worship on account of his essential and incommunicable perfections, then there is as great and essential a difference between that religious worship which is due to him, and that kind of homage which is due to creatures, as there is between his essential and supreme attributes, and their derived, dependent and limited natural and moral excellence. God allows that they have some natural and moral excellences, and accordingly requires them to pay civil or subordinate respect and homage to one another. He requires children to honor their parents, and the young "to rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man." Solomon requires his son "to fear the Lord and the king." Paul exhorts subjects "to render fear to whom fear is due, and honor to whom honor is due." Peter says to christians, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." Agreeably to such divine precepts, we find many instances in scripture, of pious persons paying civil or subordinate homage and respect to their fellow men. When

Abraham bought a burying place of the children of Heth, "he bowed down himself before the children of the land." Joseph's brethren when they viewed him as Lord of Egypt, "bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the ground." When Moses went out to meet his father-in-law Jethro, "he did obeisance to him." When David came out of the cave where Saul was, "he cried to him saying, my lord the king, and stooped with his face, to the earth, and bowed himself." After David had granted liberty to Absalom to return, Joab the general of his army, "fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king." "Nathan the prophet bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground." When the sons of the prophets saw Elisha, they said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha; and they came to meet him, and bowed down themselves to the ground before him." After David had transferred the crown from himself to Solomon, "all the congregation of the princes bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king." Such tokens of civil respect and homage are entirely proper to express that love, that fear, that obedience, that submission, and that reverence which we owe to our fellow creatures, according to the natural and moral excellences they possess, according to the several offices they sustain, and according to the various relations they stand in to us. Now it is easy to perceive that there is as great and essential a difference between civil respect and religious worship, as there is between God and created beings. There is precisely the same difference between paying supreme worship to our Creator and paying subordinate respect to our fellow creatures, as there is between exercising supreme love to God and subordinate benevolence to our fellow men. Civil respect approaches no nearer to religious worship, than the natural and moral excellence of the most exalted creature approaches to the natural and moral perfections of the Supreme Deity. This great and essential difference between civil respect and religious worship, every true worshipper of God sees, and feels, and expresses, in all his sincere addresses to the throne of divine grace.

3. If God be the only proper object of religious worship, then we may justly and conclusively argue the divinity of Christ from his actually receiving, without disapprobation, religious worship from his friends and followers. Though many who came to him and conversed with him, viewed him as a mere man, and paid him only civil respect and homage, calling him Rabbi, or good master; yet his disciples and some others, who were better acquainted with him, paid him truly religious worship, which he did not disapprove nor reject. We read, "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes fol-

lowed him. And, behold, there came a leper, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean:" and, instead of reproving him for this act of religious worship, "Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed." At another time, "Behold there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, my daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." Christ approved of his address, and restored his daughter. After Christ had saved Peter and those that were with him from sinking in the sea, "then they that were in the ship, came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the son of God." Those who first saw him after he was risen from the dead, "came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him." When he was carried up to heaven, those who saw him ascend, "worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Stephen, the first Christian martyr, died, "calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit." This was a most solemn act of religion paid to Christ, as a person possessed of divine omniscience and omnipresence. And we are told that the heavenly hosts pay the same divine and undivided worship to both the Father and the Son. John heard them crying in heaven, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Such religious worship God requires both men and angels to pay to Christ. He expressly requires all men "to honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." "And when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him." Now if both men and angels are required to pay religious worship to Christ, and have actually paid him religious worship, and if he has a right to receive it, and has actually received it, with entire approbation; then it is unquestionably true that he is a divine Person, and possesses all the essential attributes of divinity. Arians, Socinians and Unitarians, have felt the force of this argument in favor of Christ's divinity, and have endeavored to evade it, by denying that religious worship was paid to him while he tabernacled in the flesh. They say that those who are said to worship him, only meant to pay him civil respect or homage. Though this might be true in some cases, yet it could not be true in the case of Stephen, who adored him with his dying breath. But though it were possible for Stephen, in his imperfect state, to have committed the same error in paying religious worship to Christ that John did in paying religious worship to the angel; yet it cannot be supposed that all the heavenly hosts are grossly deluded in paying the same religious and divine honors to the Redeemer that they pay to the

Creator. The religious worship paid to Christ upon earth, and the religious worship paid to him in heaven, affords a plain, conclusive and unanswerable argument in favor of his absolute divinity and equality with the Father, in all his essential attributes.

4. If no other than a *divine* person be a proper object of religious worship, then the Arians are real idolaters in paying religious worship to Christ, whilst they deny his divinity. Though they acknowledge Christ to be a super-angelic being, yet they deny that he possesses self existence, independence, or any other essential attribute of divinity. And so long as they view him in this inferior light, they cannot pay divine honor to him, without being guilty of worshipping the creature instead of the Creator, which is the essence of idolatry. Though they sincerely profess to believe that he is the greatest of created beings, that he existed before angels and men, that he now reigns over them, and that he will finally judge them at the last day; still they have no right, on this supposition, to pay him religious homage. There is no essential difference between worshipping the highest and the lowest created objects, because they are all infinitely below the uncreated, self existent, Supreme Being. If Papists are guilty of idolatry in worshipping the Virgin Mary, and canonized saints; or if heathens are guilty of idolatry in worshipping demons, departed heroes, and graven images; then Arians must be guilty of idolatry in worshipping Christ, who, in their opinion, is totally destitute of every divine attribute. Socinians, who hold Christ to be a mere man, avoid this absurdity by refusing to pay him religious worship. And if Arians would become consistent, they would become Socinians; and after they became Socinians, they would become Unitarians; and after they became Unitarians, they would become Infidels. There is no place to stop between Arianism and Deism. The denial of the divinity of Christ directly tends, in its genuine consequences, to subvert the whole gospel.

5. If God be the only proper object of religious worship, then moral depravity has had a very blinding and fatal influence upon the minds of men in all ages. It has blinded the whole heathen world in respect to the being and perfections of the only living and true God, and plunged them in the grossest idolatry. They have paid religious worship to the hosts of heaven, to demons, to departed spirits, to four footed beasts and creeping things. It has blinded the minds of the great majority of the Christian world, and led the Pope and his votaries to worship the Virgin Mary and deified saints and dumb idols. It has led the whole body of Arians to pay divine honors to one whom they believe to be destitute of every divine perfection, and

to blend the worship of a creature with the worship of his Creator. Such great and general blindness of mankind cannot be owing to any defect in their understandings, but must result from the moral corruption of their hearts. The light of nature and the light of the gospel has shone in darkness, and the darkness has not comprehended it. The apostle ascribes the idolatry of the world to this criminal cause. It was because "they became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools: And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

6. If God be the only proper object of religious worship on account of his supremely great and amiable perfections, then those are extremely criminal who never worship him at all. There are vast numbers of the human race who never pay religious worship to any being in the universe. This is more common among those who call themselves christians, than among the most savage and ignorant pagans. They almost universally pay religious worship to some being or object which they deem divine. But how many are there in a Christian land, who cast off fear and restrain prayer before God! Though they know the only living and true God, yet they glorify him not as God, either in secret, in private, or in public. They live without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. Such persons are more vile than the brutes that perish. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" but such Christian pagans know not their Creator, preserver and benefactor, and treat him with the highest neglect and contempt. They despise his favor, and defy his frowns. Hear the admonitions of the prophet: "Understand ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?" Will he not "pour out his fury upon those that call not on his name?" "Can their hearts endure, or their hands be strong in the day when God shall deal with them?"

Finally, this subject exhorts all to renounce the idols which they have set up in their hearts. How many are setting up idols in their hearts! All who love the world, or the things of the world supremely, are idolaters in the sight of God, and these idols are as fatal as graven images; and must be removed, in order to glorify and enjoy God.

SERMON II.

THE WORK OF CREATION.

THUS the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested the seventh day from all his work which he had made. — GENESIS, ii. 1, 2.

MEN have always been disposed to be wise above what is written, and to lean to their own understanding rather than to divine revelations. The astronomers, who hold the highest rank among philosophers, have made such great discoveries respecting the sun, moon and stars, that they have called in question the account which God has given by Moses of the creation of the world. They suppose that the heavens and the earth which Moses mentions, compose but a small part of the work of creation; and that angels and men compose but a small part of intelligent creatures. They imagine that all the fixed stars are centres of so many distinct systems, just as the sun is the centre of our system; and that all those material worlds are as full of rational inhabitants as this world is. This opinion is generally adopted by commentators and divines, and Mr. Stackhouse in particular, in his history of the Bible. But it is a serious question whether this opinion is not more philosophical than scriptural; and whether it does not bear hard against the account in our text which the Creator himself has given of his great work. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the hosts of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested the seventh day from all his work, which he had made." These words plainly suggest this general idea:

That God created all things in the space of six days. I shall,

I. Consider what things God did create in the period of six days; And,

II. Show that those things which he created in that period, comprise all his works of creation.

I. We are to consider what things God did create in the period of six days.

This we may easily collect from the account which Moses and other inspired writers have given us of the works of creation. Moses tells us what God created the first day, what he created the second day, what he created the third day, what he created the fourth day, what he created the fifth day, what he created the sixth day; and sums up the whole in the words of the text: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work, which he had made; and he rested the seventh day from all his work, which he had made." It appears by this account, that the heavens and the earth with their hosts, that is, with their inhabitants, comprise all things that were created in the space of six days. By the heavens we are to understand the upper and lower heaven, or the visible and invisible heaven. The upper heaven is the invisible world, where God and all perfectly holy beings reside; and where all perfectly sinful beings are confined. The lower or visible heaven contains the sun, moon and stars, and the earth, with every thing that lives and moves and exists, either upon it, or below its surface. All these things, contained in the heavens and the earth, were created at one and the same time, or in the space of six days. This we may fairly collect, not only from the account which Moses has given us of the creation, but from the account which other inspired writers have given us of that great work. In the twentieth of Exodus we read, "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is;" that is, all the creatures, whether rational or irrational, which are in heaven and earth. In the first of John we read, "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made." Here God is said to create all things by Jesus Christ; and to create nothing without him. As this refers to Moses' account of the creation in six days, so it confines the creation of all things to that particular period of time. But it may be said that none of the texts which have been cited, prove that angels were created at the same period when the heavens and the earth were created. This however, is asserted by another sacred writer. The apostle Paul declares that Christ is the

image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature. "For," he adds, "by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities; all things were created by him and for him." This passage puts it beyond doubt, that not only the heavens and the earth, but all their hosts of men and of angels were created by Christ, and that in the space of six days. I now proceed to show,

II. That those things, which were created at that one period of time, comprised, or included all things that ever were created. This will appear from various considerations.

1. There is reason to think that when God began to create, he would not rest, until he had completely finished his whole work of creation. This Moses represents him to have done in the text. He says he did not rest, until he had created the heavens and the earth, and all that he intended to create at that time. We are not to suppose that God rested from creating the heavens and the earth at the end of six days, because his creating power was exhausted; but merely because he had finished what he proposed to create. When he began to create, he might have continued to create from that time to this, and may still continue to create for ever. But supposing he has been creating and will be creating from eternity unto eternity; his works of creation must nevertheless be limited. He cannot, to speak with reverence, continue to create till his power is exhausted, and all space is filled; so that there is no room left to make another world. His works of creation, therefore, must be bounded, both by time and space. And if they must be bounded by time, why not by six days, as well as by six years, or six thousand years, or any longer space of time? He was undoubtedly able to create all that he ever designed to create, in six days, as well as in any longer period of duration. And if his works must be bounded by space, which never can be filled, why should they not be bounded by that proportion of space which the heavens and the earth now occupy, as well as any other? God was governed by his wisdom and not by his power, in respect to creation. His wisdom dictated how many things he should create, and how long he should be in creating them. And since he has told us that he finished the work of creation in six days, we have reason to think that he did create all that he intended to create in that space of time. If any imagine that it would have been wiser and better if he had continued to create much longer, and had made many more worlds, and then rested; let them consider where this mode of reasoning would carry them. Had he created world after world for thousands, or millions of years, it still might be asked, whether

it would not have been wiser and better to create as many more? It is, therefore, just as reasonable to believe that God created all that he ever did create, or ever intended to create, in six days, as in any other space of time that could be mentioned, or conceived.

2. All the works of God must compose but one whole, or perfect system. This we may safely conclude from the perfect wisdom of God. He could not consistently begin, or continue to operate, before he had formed a wise and benevolent design to be answered by creation. This design must have been one; and have comprised the nature and number of all things that he should ever create; because it would not have been wise to create any one thing, but what would some way or other, tend to promote his one great and good design. Every house is built by some man; and every wise builder forms, as nearly as he can, the dimensions of the house he is going to build, and fixes in his own mind all the materials necessary to complete his building. He means to provide as many and no more articles, than he supposes are necessary to finish his house. Now, the apostle tells us that "he, who built all things, is God." If the only wise God made all things, then he had a wise and good design in making all things; and if he had a wise and good design in making all things, then he made nothing more, nor less, than he foresaw would have a tendency, some way or other, to promote his one, connected and perfect design in creation. Suppose that God had created a million of worlds and no more; the reason would have been that so many worlds, and no more, and no fewer, would completely answer his design in creating. And all these could not answer his one great design in creating them, without composing one whole, or connected system. For if they were not connected, there would be no reason for creating just so many and no more. Hence it appears that all the works of creation, be they more or less in number, must compose one whole, made up of all its parts connected together. And if this be true, it is reasonable to suppose that God created all things at once; or that when he began to create, he continued to create, till he had created every thing which he foresaw would be necessary to carry into effect his one, original, and perfectly wise and good design in creation. And he could create all these things in six days, as well as in any other period of time.

3. Those things which we know God did create in six days, compose a whole, or form a complete system. The lower heaven is intimately connected with the earth. The sun, the moon, the stars, the firmament, the atmosphere, the heat, the cold, the clouds and the rain, were all made for the service

and benefit of mankind; and are so necessary, that they could not subsist without the kindly influence of these things, which belong to the lower heaven. And it is no less evident that there is a constituted connection between the inhabitants of the upper heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world. The upper heaven was the first place, and the inhabitants of it the first intelligent beings, that God brought into existence on the first day of creation. This is strongly intimated by the question which God put to Job, "Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth? when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" There was an early communication between angels and men. It was an evil angel that tempted our first parents to commit their first offence, which ruined all their posterity. There were good angels, who guarded the tree of life after the first apostacy. And good angels have ever since been ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. But the great and glorious scheme of redemption has formed a very important and inseparable connection between the upper and lower worlds, and all things which were created in six days. This the apostle Paul teaches in several places. In one place he says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here God is represented as creating all things in reference to, and in connection with, the great scheme of redemption. In another place, we are told that "all things were not only created by Christ, but for him;" that is, to promote the great design for which he suffered and died. And we are farthermore told that it was God's eternal purpose, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather together in one all things in Christ; both which are in heaven and which are on earth." The work of redemption has formed an inseparable and everlasting connection between the visible and invisible worlds. So that all things, which were created in six days, form a whole, or are constituent parts of one great and important system. This gives us just ground to conclude that this system contains all the works of God, and was brought into existence at one and the same time.

4. Those things which were created in six days, not only form a whole, or system, but the most perfect system conceiva-

ble. All the parts, taken together, appear to be completely suited to answer the highest and best possible end that God could propose to answer by creation. The highest and best end God could propose, in the creation of all things, was the most full display of all his great and amiable perfections. Such a display of himself must make both himself and his intelligent creatures the most completely holy and happy. If we now examine the system of things which he actually created in six days, we shall see that they are abundantly sufficient to display all the perfections of his nature to the best advantage. By the creation of the heavens and the earth, he has given as full a display of his power as can be given. The heavenly bodies are immensely great, and animals and insects are extremely small; and by creating such great and small things, in a vast variety, he has displayed his creating power as clearly as if he had created millions of larger or smaller worlds. If we consider the beauty and order of the heavens and the earth, we must be convinced that he has displayed his wisdom, as clearly as creation can display it. If we consider the adaptedness of the heavens and the earth to the use, convenience and happiness of his creatures, we shall see that they display his goodness as clearly as creation can display it. If we consider the nature and character of good and bad angels, and of good and bad men, we shall see that, according to the plan of redemption, they will be so disposed of, as to bring all the perfections of God into the clearest, strongest and most interesting light. By making some perfectly holy and happy for ever; by making some perfectly holy and happy for a season, and then subjecting them to a state of complete sin and misery for ever; by making some holy, and then unholy, and then holy and happy for ever; and by making some totally sinful and miserable to all eternity, he will display his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his sovereignty, his grace and his justice, in the fullest and clearest manner possible. If he had created ten thousand worlds of intelligent creatures, he could not have placed them in any circumstances different from the circumstances of angels and men; and consequently he could not have displayed any of his perfections in a more full, amiable and glorious light than they will be displayed by the rational and irrational creatures which he created in six days. These works form not only a system, but the best possible system; so that, as Solomon says, "nothing can be put to it, or taken from it," to make it more perfect. And from this we may justly conclude that God did, at one and the same time, create all things that he ever intended to create. I must add,

5. It appears from the process of the great day, that angels

and men are the only rational creatures who will then be called to give an account of their conduct. Christ has plainly informed us that all good and bad angels, and all good and bad men will then be collected together, and judged according to their works; but no other intelligent creatures are mentioned as being present on that great and solemn day, either by Christ, or any other inspired writer. But why not, if the sun, moon, and all the planets and fixed stars are inhabited by rational and accountable beings? The great day is called "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The design of it is to display the rectitude of God's conduct towards both the happy and the miserable, or to make it appear to every individual person that he has not only treated him right, but that he has treated every other rational creature in the universe right. It is only on this account that we can see the necessity or even the propriety of a general judgment. God can make every person see and feel that he has treated him right before the day of judgment; but he cannot make every person know and see that he has treated all other creatures right, without calling them all together, and fully opening his conduct towards them and their conduct towards him and one another. And since this will be the business of the great day, it is necessary that every intelligent creature in the universe should be actually present at the day of judgment. If the sun, or moon, or planets, or fixed stars, are inhabited by rational and accountable creatures, it is as necessary that they should be present as that angels and men should be; for they must be constituent parts of God's great system; and his conduct towards them, and their conduct towards him, must have had some connection with his conduct towards angels and men. But we have no reason to expect from any thing said in scripture, that any intelligent creatures will be present at the day of judgment, besides angels and men; from which the inference is natural and irresistible, that no other intelligent creatures besides angels and men ever have been created. These form a moral, connected and perfect system, and of course are to be called together and judged according to their works at the last day, and to be set up as mirrors to display the divine glory in the clearest manner to all eternity; which will completely answer the highest and best end that God could propose in the great work of creation.

Now the foregoing considerations, if taken singly, and much more if taken together, form an argument in favor of the Mosaic account of the creation, which cannot be easily resisted; and which seems to constrain us to believe that the heavens and the earth with their inhabitants, which were created in six days, comprise all things that God ever did and ever will cre-

ate. The whole current of scripture is in favor of this supposition; and it may be well questioned, whether any argument, drawn from reason and philosophy, can counterbalance such scriptural evidence. We must believe, therefore, that God created all things in the space of six days, and has ever since rested from the work of creation.

But, however, I will consider several things, which may be objected against the leading sentiments in this discourse.

1. It may be said that Moses had no occasion to mention any other worlds than the heavens and the earth, if there had been millions of them, which were created before this world. Answer: If there had been other worlds created before this, it would not have been proper for Moses to say, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" which naturally implies that the creation of the heavens and the earth were the first things that he ever created. The phrase "in the beginning" has reference to the first time of God's exerting his creative power, and not to the order of the things which he created; and excludes the supposition of his having created any being, or object, before he created the heavens and the earth.

2. It may be said that it is more agreeable to our ideas of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, that God should create more worlds than two, or ten, or twenty, or twenty thousand; and, therefore, it is very rational to suppose and believe that he has actually created as many worlds as there are suns, and moons, and planets, and fixed stars. Answer: This does not appear more consistent with the wisdom of God, which must limit creation to one finite connected system. For two worlds may form as wise and benevolent a system as two millions. And to suppose the contrary, is to suppose that it is not only morally impossible, but naturally impossible for God to form the most wise and benevolent system.

3. It may be asked, why has God actually created the planets and fixed stars, if he never designed that they should be inhabited by rational and accountable creatures? They are said to be immensely larger than this world, and supposed to be capable of supporting immensely more inhabitants than this world is capable of supporting. Why then should not God fill them with rational inhabitants; and if he has not filled them with such inhabitants, what valuable purpose can they answer? To this it may be replied,

1. That they may answer many valuable and important purposes of which we are at present wholly ignorant. There are ten thousand objects in this world, that we cannot perceive answer any valuable purposes. Who can tell why God has made so many high, rugged, barren mountains; or so many large, barren

plains; or so many dreary, sunken, barren swamps and marshes; or so many useless flowers and poisonous herbs; or so many apparently useless fowls and fishes? But though we cannot see what good purposes such objects answer, yet we must believe that God has never made any one thing in vain; or which he has not made, or will not make to answer some valuable end. And the planets and fixed stars, those vast and distant orbs, may answer a thousand important purposes with which we are totally unacquainted, though not a living creature moves on their surface. Though the sun is a hundred and sixty times larger than our earth, and though there may not be a single inhabitant upon it, yet we know it is of essential and immense service to our world. And though we cannot see what peculiar benefit the planets and fixed stars, at so great a distance, can do us, yet they may be of vast advantage to us in innumerable ways which we cannot discover. Besides, as all things were created by Christ, and for Christ, so those immensely great and grand objects may have been made to display divine power, and give magnificence to the great Redeemer and his glorious work of redemption. For some reasons, God has spread a beauty over the whole face of the earth; and for similar reasons, "he may have garnished the heavens by his Spirit." All the arguments, in favor of the planets and fixed stars' being inhabited, are founded in ignorance; but the objections against their being inhabited, are founded on scripture. And to set up our short sighted reason and vain philosophy against the inspiration of Moses, is certainly unbecoming, if not sinfully presumptuous.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said, that the enemies of divine revelation have no just ground to object against the Bible because it does not give a true and full account of the work of creation. Thomas Paine and other infidel writers have made this objection against the inspiration of the scriptures. They say that they cannot see why God should not create more worlds than two; and why those worlds should not be inhabited. They argue from the immense magnitude of the planets, and from their vast distance from our world, that they could not be made for the benefit of the inhabitants of this world, and consequently, that they can be of no service if they are not inhabited. They argue from analogy, that it is absurd that the greater should be made to serve the less. But some little things are vastly more valuable and important than some far greater things. One human soul is infinitely more important than the sun, moon,

planets, and the whole material creation. They overlook the vast importance of the whole human race, who are rational and immortal beings, and capable of endless happiness or misery; and the great and astonishing work of redemption, which has been devised and carried on by the incarnation, life, death and government of the divine Redeemer. It is not half so strange that God should garnish the heavens with the sun, moon and stars, those vast material orbs, for the service of men, as that he should give his only begotten Son, the Lord of glory, to suffer and die on the cross to save the sinful race of men from deserved and everlasting ruin. God designed that the whole work of creation should be subordinate and subservient to the great work of redemption; and that the inhabitants of the upper world should all be employed in the service of his Son, and for the benefit of this lower world. If philosophers had just and exalted ideas of the work of redemption, they would not be so apt to magnify the sun, moon and stars above this little world and its apparently little inhabitants. The inspired writers, who unfold the great plan of redemption and the infinitely important consequences which shall flow from it, have given us a much more clear, just and extensive view of this world, than any uninspired philosophers ever have given, or can give, by all their researches into the works of nature. We ought not, therefore, to be slow of heart to believe what the inspired writers have told us about this world, notwithstanding all the dreams of uninspired men. We have a more sure word of prophecy, to which we should do well to hearken, instead of listening to any visionary, philosophical objections against the inspiration of the holy scriptures. The objections which have been made against the Mosaic account of the creation, have arisen from the same source from which almost all other objections against the Bible have arisen; that is, from ignorance of the work of redemption.

2. If angels and men are all the intelligent beings that God created in six days, then there is no reason to think that this world, after the day of judgment, will be a place of residence for either the happy or miserable part of mankind. There are three very different opinions concerning the state of this world after the general judgment. Some suppose that this world will then be the new heavens and new earth which are spoken of in scripture, and the place of the final and eternal residence of good men. Some suppose, on the contrary, that this world will be reserved to the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, where they will suffer to all eternity. A third opinion is, that this world will be burnt up at the day of judgment, and never become habitable again. All these different and contrary opinions are professedly founded on particular passages of scripture,

which may seem to countenance each of them. But if we consider that all the righteous will have gone to heaven before that day, and all the wicked to the regions of darkness, except the righteous and wicked that shall then be alive, we have good reason to think that this world will be reduced to ashes, before Christ shall sit on the judgment seat. For we are told that the righteous, who shall be alive at that day, shall meet the Lord in the air, and leave this world; and undoubtedly the wicked, who are alive, like the righteous, will immediately stand before the judgment seat of Christ. After the solemn process is ended, we are told what will become of both the righteous and the wicked. To the righteous, Christ will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But to the wicked he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Here is no intimation that either saints or sinners will be sent back to this world, as the place of their final residence; but it is plainly intimated that the wicked will be sent to the regions of darkness, where the fallen angels are now, and will finally take up their eternal residence there, while the righteous will be admitted to the mansions which Christ shall have prepared for them in the kingdom of heaven, where none but holy men and angels will reside for ever. But if the planets were inhabited by either holy or unholy beings, why is no mention made of their being present at the great day of decision, and of their going away with the righteous, or with the wicked? The only rational answer to this question is, that there are no such holy, or unholy inhabitants in the planets or fixed stars.

3. If God acted systematically in the work of creation, and formed every individual in connection with and in relation to the whole, then we may justly conclude that he always acts systematically in governing the world. If he had but one great ultimate object in the work of creation, and made such creatures and such things only as he saw necessary to accomplish his ultimate design, then we may be sure that he governs every creature and every object in subserviency to his ultimate design in creation. He has a regard to the whole material world, in moving, directing and disposing of every particle of matter; and he has as constant regard to the whole moral world, in his conduct towards every rational being. Both the natural and moral worlds are always transparent in his view; and whenever he causes any thing to move in the natural world, or any creature to act in the moral world, he has a regard to his whole system. He has a paternal and impartial regard to his whole family in heaven and earth, in his treatment of every angel, and in his treatment of every man. A wise and kind parent will

have an impartial regard to his whole family, and will not favor one child to the injury of his whole family. And, if he have a large family, he will treat every one of his children differently from what he would if he had but one child. So the wise and kind parent of the universe treats angels differently from what he would if there were no men; and he treats men differently from what he would if there were no angels. They are all connected like one family; and God's conduct, in the course of providence, is governed by these mutual relations, though neither angels nor men discover all these relations and connections, and of course do not, in a thousand cases, see the reasons of the dispensations of providence and grace. It is because God governs all beings and all objects systematically, that his judgments are a great deep, and his ways past finding out, by men or angels. And God will continue to govern angels and men, kings and kingdoms, and every intelligent creature, in this systematical and mysterious manner, as long as the world stands, though it plunges all the inhabitants of heaven and earth in darkness and doubts, hopes and fears; because he cannot give account of his matters, without explaining his whole system. But,

4. If God created all things at once, and as one whole or connected system, then he can remove all the darkness which now rests, or ever has rested, on his providence. It is only to bring all his intelligent creatures together, and show them their relations to and connection with each other; and that will discover the various reasons of his conduct towards every individual, and convince them all that he has been holy, wise and just, in all the dispensations of his providence and grace. When they see the same reasons that he saw for his conduct, it will carry irresistible evidence to every created being, that he has treated him perfectly right. He has done this, partly, in a great many instances. He convinced Joseph and his brethren that he meant it for good, that he had treated them all as he did treat them. As God has a reason for every instance of his conduct towards every creature he has made, so he never forgets any reason of his conduct; and this enables him to show all his creatures, however numerous they are, why he has smiled upon them at one time, and why he has frowned upon them at another; why he has given them one thing, and denied them another; and why he has treated one so differently from another. He knows all the relations and connections between individuals, nations, and kingdoms; and he treats them all according to the various relations which they bear to him, and to each other. And he intends to make them all know all these relations, upon which all his conduct towards them is founded.

It is impossible that he should give them this knowledge, so long as they live separately, and are acting the various parts on the stage of life which he has appointed. But when he has brought them all together, and shown them all the situations, relations and connections, in which they have been placed, then he can make them see why he has placed them where he has placed them, why he has treated them as he has treated them, and why he has employed them as he has employed them, to answer the wise ends for which he created them. They will then see the same reasons of his conduct which he saw before he laid the foundations of the earth, or created angels and men. It is sufficient for him to tell them that they know not now, why, or what he does, but they shall know hereafter to their perfect satisfaction.

5. If God created all things at once, to answer a certain great and good purpose, then that day will be a glorious day, when this purpose shall be completely accomplished. And it will be completely accomplished at the end of the world. So that the end of the world will be a far more glorious day than the day of creation. Then the sons of God shouted aloud for joy, though they knew but very little of the great and good designs God had in creating it. They have been very ardently engaged in looking into these designs, as they have been gradually unfolding from age to age, for nearly six thousand years. Nor has their ardor abated, but rather increased, to see the sun and stars falling, and the whole frame of this lower world dissolving; and to behold the winding up of the great drama, in which all intelligent beings have been actors. And it is equally true, that good men, as well as good angels, sincerely desire to see the great result of creation, and the means and instruments by which God's ultimate end is accomplished. The things to be seen, to be heard, and to be known, at the last day, will be unspeakably pleasing to every benevolent heart. Men are extremely fond of knowing what has been done, what is doing, and what will be done, in every part of the world, while they live in it. They are anxious to know the present state of Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, France, Russia, and Britain. But at the last day, they shall know all the events which have taken place in every part of the universe, from the beginning to the end of time, and all the agents by whom they have been brought about, and all the motives by which they were governed, and all the reasons why God caused them all to do what they did, to accomplish his great design in the work of creation. And this knowledge will clear up all the dark things in providence, and all the dark and mysterious parts of God's conduct in the creation and government of the heavens and the earth,

with all their hosts of men and angels. And in this light, all holy beings will see nothing but light to all eternity; which will fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

6. If the end of the world will exhibit such a blaze of perfect light, then we may be sure that it will fix all intelligent creatures in their final and unalterable state. Those who are happy in the light of the last day, must necessarily be happy for ever; and those who are unhappy in that light, must be unhappy and completely miserable for ever. None will be saved or lost after that day. Those who then love light will always love it; and those who then hate light will always hate it. God's purposes will then be so fully answered, and things will then be brought to that perfect state, that no alteration can be made for the better. And the whole universe will be convinced that the sentences pronounced at that day are absolutely decisive and irreversible.

SERMON III.

PROPHECY.

These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. — John, xii. 16.

The day after Christ had visited Lazarus at Bethany, "much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that he was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion; behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." This triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem was predicted in the ninth chapter of Zechariah. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." These things, however, which were so plainly foretold by the prophet, "understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." God had good reasons for foretelling this great and joyful event, though he knew that his prediction would not be understood until after it was fulfilled.

In treating of the subject of prophecy, which now lies before us, I shall show,

I. That God does foretell, in his word, many events before they come to pass;

II. That he never fails to bring to pass the events he foretells; And,

III. That he has good reasons for foretelling events before he brings them to pass.

I. I am to show that God foretells, in his word, many events before they come to pass. This appears from the text, and from the whole history of his conduct from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Many of the great and important events which have come to pass, we find foretold in the sacred scriptures. God foretold the incarnation of Christ, four thousand years before he became incarnate. He foretold the general flood, an hundred and twenty years before it swept mankind from the earth. He foretold the fate of Shem, Ham and Japheth, long before their dispersion at the building of Babel. He predicted that the Amorites should be destroyed and that the seed of Abraham should possess their land, four hundred years before these events took place. He foretold the fortune of Joseph, and of all Jacob's family, long before either of them went down to Egypt. He foretold to Moses, that he should actually lead Israel out of Egypt, and that the people should worship in that mountain where he was then speaking before the event came to pass. He foretold the character, conduct and condition of Ishmael and his posterity, for ages to come. He foretold the dispersion of the Jews, his own people, hundreds of years before they were actually scattered all over the earth. He foretold the ruin of Nineveh and Babylon, sometime before they were destroyed. He foretold the rising and falling of the four great empires, before they rose and fell. He foretold the time and place of Christ's birth, the manner of his life, and the most remarkable circumstances of his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, before he appeared in the flesh. He foretold a general apostacy from Christianity. And last of all, he foretold the corruption and ruin of the seven churches of Asia, the rise and fall of the Mohammedans, the rise and fall of the man of sin, the commencement and duration of the millennium, the last declension of religion, the second coming of Christ, the general judgment, and the final state of all holy and unholy creatures. This is a brief and general account of prophecy. A vast many more particular predictions might have been enumerated; but those which have been mentioned are sufficient to make it appear that God has usually foretold great and interesting events long before they have come to pass. He has raised up prophets from age to age, to reveal his purposes to his professing people, and through them to the rest of mankind, who are all deeply interested in their final accomplishment.

I now proceed to show,

II. That God always brings to pass the events which he foretells. This will appear, if we consider,

1. That we have no evidence that he has ever failed of bringing to pass the events which he has foretold. We know that he has brought about many things which we find were foretold in his word. Though the disciples of Christ did not know, at first, that he had fulfilled his prediction concerning his riding in triumph into Jerusalem, yet they afterwards knew and declared that they themselves had been personally instrumental of fulfilling it. We know that God has already fulfilled his predictions concerning the old world, concerning the seed of Abraham, concerning the Babylonish, Persian, Grecian and Roman empires, concerning the coming of Christ, concerning the dispersion of the Jews, and concerning the rise and corrupting influence of the man of sin. The fulfilment of these predictions affords a strong presumptive evidence that he has never yet failed, and never will fail, of bringing to pass all the events he has foretold. His conduct has hitherto confirmed the veracity of his predictions, and given us sufficient evidence to believe that his faithfulness is immutable and infallible.

2. God has never foretold any events but such as he was willing to bring to pass. He never was, and never could be, under any compulsion to foretell any events whatever. We cannot conceive any cause which should constrain him to foretell any events which he did not choose should exist. And we cannot conceive that he should foretell even such events as he designed should take place, unless he chose to foretell them. We must conclude, therefore, that all the events which he has foretold, were such as he chose should exist, and such as he chose to foretell. This amounts to a high degree of certainty, that he always does and will bring all things to pass that he has foretold. If he had been compelled to foretell events which he did not choose should exist, and which he did not choose to foretell, we could have no ground to believe that he always does, and always will, bring about all the events he has foretold. But since he chose that all the events he has foretold should exist, and since he chose to foretell them, we may be assured that he will punctually and faithfully fulfil every prediction in his word, according to its strict and proper meaning. What God once chooses should exist, he always chooses should exist, and what he once chooses should exist, he is always willing should exist. He is always in one mind, and none can turn him. He never did, and never will alter any of his determinations. He has never foretold any event but what he has determined to bring to pass; and therefore we may be certain that he fulfils, from time to time, every event which he has foretold in his word.

3. God has foretold nothing but what his own glory requires

him to fulfil. As he has foreordained nothing but what he intends shall promote his own glory, so he has foretold nothing but what his own glory requires him to bring to pass. He regards his own glory more than any of his creatures regard their interests. We know that they sometimes regard and pursue what they suppose to be their own interests, with great, constant and persevering attention, diligence, activity and zeal. But the attention, diligence, activity and zeal of the Lord of Hosts in promoting his own glory, is infinitely greater. And since God's heart is bound up in his own glory, he will infallibly pursue that course of conduct in his providence, which he views as best suited to promote it. His predictions tell us what his heart is fixed upon, and when we know what his heart is fixed upon, we have no ground to doubt that he will pursue the objects of his desires to the utmost of his power. Poor, weak, dependent creatures are given to change, and grow weary and faint, and totally discouraged in their most ardent and sanguine pursuits. But God is never faint, or weary, or discouraged in his pursuits, or disposed to change the objects of his pursuit, which affords a very strong and weighty evidence that he will infallibly bring about the events which he has decreed and foretold. Besides,

4. God has foretold nothing but what he is able to bring to pass. Job said unto God, "I know that thou canst do every thing." This is strictly true. God can do every thing that power can do, or that does not involve a contradiction. There is none that can stay his hand, or effectually resist his operations in the kingdoms of nature, providence and grace. He can overturn, overturn, and overturn all difficulties, impediments or obstacles, that stand in the way of his designs and operations. If the power of men resist his designs, he can break their power. If the hearts of men resist his designs, he can change their hearts. If kings or kingdoms presume to oppose him, he can break them as a potter's vessel is broken. If all nations were to unite their counsels and exertions against God's purposes and predictions, they would be of no avail to prevent him from bringing about the events which he has designed and predicted to bring about. This God knew when he foretold future events, and this we know after he has foretold them. We have, therefore, the highest and strongest evidence that can be derived from the conduct, the power and glory of God, that he will never fail to fulfil his predictions, or to bring to pass every event which he has predicted in his word.

It now remains to show,

III. That God has good reasons for foretelling events before they come to pass. God was under no obligations to mankind

to foretell any future events. Though he had foreordained all future events, and consequently foresaw all future events, yet he was under no obligations to inform mankind what events he foresaw, and determined to bring about. He knew, indeed, the natural curiosity and propensity of mankind to look into futurity, and, if possible, to discover the good or evil which may await them in time to come. But he never would have adopted the method of predicting future events, merely to gratify their vain and sinful desires. There is, therefore, just ground to inquire, what were the real and good reasons of his foretelling future events in his word. We find that it has been his usual way from age to age, to raise up holy men, and inspire them to foretell great and important events, which he had determined to bring to pass. The question now is, Why did he adopt this mode of conduct towards mankind? There may be two very good reasons for his foretelling future events in his word:

1. To convince mankind that he is concerned in bringing about all the events which he has foretold. They are extremely apt to overlook the hand of God in bringing about events in the course of his providence. They will hardly believe that his hand is concerned in bringing to pass any event, unless it appears extraordinary, supernatural, or miraculous. Of course, they will not see and acknowledge his hand, even in fulfilling his predictions, until after they are fulfilled. This was the case in respect to the body of the Jewish nation, as well as in respect to the disciples of Christ. The Jews did not see nor acknowledge the divine power and agency, in bringing about the incarnation, crucifixion and ascension of Christ; while God was invisibly and irresistibly producing these great and important events, which he had foretold in his word. Though God had minutely described the person, the conduct, the preaching and sufferings of Christ, yet the Jews did not discover these things, nor the hand of God in bringing them to pass. And even the disciples of Christ did not know that God influenced them to carry him in triumph to Jerusalem, until he had come, and had left the world. The peculiar people of God had been for ages before equally stupid and blind to the hand of God, in fulfilling prediction after prediction concerning Christ. God upbraids them for this, and assigns it as a reason why he foretold events before he brought them to pass. "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; the Lord of

Hosts is his name. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I showed it thee; lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image hath commanded them." All mankind are naturally like the Jews, in overlooking and disbelieving the hand of God in bringing to pass those things which he has foretold in his word. Nothing, therefore, is better calculated to convince mankind of the universality of divine providence, than God's foretelling future events. For when he has fulfilled his predictions, and actually brought about the events he has predicted, he has set his hand and seal to these events, and marked them as the production of his own hand. And as his hand and seal will sooner or later be seen, it will be out of the power of man to disbelieve that he brought about the events which bear this plain and legible signature. As this signature is actually set upon all events which have been foretold, so the predictions of those events will sooner or later convince all mankind that God was concerned in causing those events to take place. And this is one very important reason, why God has foretold so many future events in his word.

2. God's foretelling and bringing to pass some events, demonstrates the truth of his bringing all other events to pass, which he has not predicted. For the events which he has predicted stand inseparably connected with all the other events which he has not predicted. God's predicting the death and crucifixion of Christ four thousand years before Christ came, suffered and died, and bringing these events to pass, stood connected with all other events which took place in every part of the world during that period. If God had not governed all events from Adam to Christ, he could not have brought about the death of Christ. He must have brought into being all the men that existed from Adam to Christ, and governed all their thoughts, words and actions, in order to prepare the way for the existence of Judas, Pontius Pilate, and of all others who were concerned in his crucifixion. And since God has foretold a multitude of events which reach from the crucifixion of Christ to the end of the world, he has set his hand and seal to all those events; which will demonstrate that he was concerned in bringing them to pass, after they have actually taken place. And, since all other events, from the crucifixion of Christ to the end of the world, stand inseparably connected with the events foretold; the final accomplishment of all divine predictions must necessarily de-

monstrate that God had always governed all events, without a single exception, from the beginning to the end of the world. The glory of God and the good of the universe depend upon its being universally known, that his heart and hand are concerned in every event that takes place. It appears, therefore, that God could not have proposed a nobler, or more important end, in foretelling future events, than to make all his intelligent creatures believe that he exerts his power and influence in governing all things. This design of prophecy coincides with God's ultimate end in creation, and directly serves to promote it. It demonstrates, that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things;" that he is the Alpha and Omega, or the great centre to which all things past, present, and to come, ultimately tend.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the design of prophecy, that the predictions which God has already recorded in his word, are the last he will ever give. He continued to foretell future events from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, from Christ to the apostle John. Then he directed him to close the canon of scripture, and denounce a curse upon the man who should presume to add any thing to, or take any thing from, his written word. This looks like putting a final period to prophecy from that time to the end of the world. And we have reason to think so, because the series of predictions in the book of Revelation respects the most important events from the days of John to the final consummation of all things; by which God has infallibly marked all future events as the production of his own hand. When the events which he has predicted are actually brought to pass, it will necessarily appear that he has constantly governed the world. There never has been any occasion for new prophecies since the death of John, and there never will be. All who have pretended to prophecy since that time have been impostors, who were deceived themselves or meant to deceive others. There have been not a few such persons, and may be again; but they are to be disbelieved, and treated according to the directions of the more sure word of prophecy.

2. It appears from the design of prophecies, that they may answer their end, though they are not understood before they are fulfilled. Many, if not most of the divine predictions in the Bible, are delivered in such dark, figurative language, as is not very easy to understand. This is the case in respect to common people, and even in respect to the most ingenious, studious and learned divines. Expositors have found more difficulty, and made more mistakes, in their comments on the

prophetical parts of scripture, than on any other parts of it. This has led some to think lightly of prophecies in general, and to despise all attempts to explain them. Voltaire says, Sir Isaac Newton wrote upon the prophecies to console mankind for his superiority over them in other respects. But though the general obscurity of prophecies renders them difficult to explain and understand, either before they are fulfilled, or while they are fulfilling, or for some time after; yet they may answer the important purpose which God designed to answer by them. Though the vision be for an appointed time, yet at the end it will speak, and answer the purpose for which it is given. Whether a prediction be understood before it is fulfilled, or while it is fulfilling, or even a long time after, it will finally mark the event with a divine signature, and demonstrate that God was concerned in bringing it to pass. There is reason to think that there are many predictions in the Bible which have been punctually fulfilled long ago, and which have never been fully understood or properly explained. But they will be understood some time or other, and then answer the purpose for which they were given. Great pains have been taken to understand and explain the predictions concerning the return of the Jews to their native land, the overthrow of the Mohammedan imposture, the nature, commencement and duration of the millennium. But it is a question, whether any body has understood and properly explained these important predictions respecting these important future events. These predictions, however, will be fulfilled, and understood, at the very time God intended, and consequently will fully answer his original purpose.

3. It appears from the design of prophecies, that their being disbelieved does not in the least destroy their evidence or importance. They are designed to make it appear that God is concerned in bringing about all predicted and unpredicted events. Their being disbelieved by some, or by many, before they are fulfilled, or while they are fulfilling, or long after they are fulfilled, does not prevent their being fulfilled and being understood, just as God designed they should be; and consequently does not destroy or diminish their usefulness. Though thousands now disbelieve the predictions concerning the overthrow of Popery, Paganism, and all false religions, their disbelief may promote, rather than retard the accomplishment of these predictions. We may ask them the same pertinent question which Paul asked the Jews. "What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?" What if the Jews disbelieve the predictions concerning them? or what if the Mohammedans disbelieve the predictions concerning them? or what if the Papists disbelieve the

predictions concerning them? Their disbelief will not expunge these predictions from the Bible, nor hinder God from fulfilling them. So that the unbelief of Jews, Mohammedans, and Papists, ought not to destroy or weaken our faith in the divine predictions concerning them. The disbelief of divine predictions has not prevented their fulfilment in time past; and it will not prevent the fulfilment of those predictions which remain hitherto unfulfilled. The Jews' disbelief of Christ's first coming, did not prevent his coming at the appointed time; and their present disbelief of his second coming, will not prevent his second appearance to judge the world. God is constantly preparing the way as fast as possible, by one event after another, for the great day of consummation, when all preceding predictions will be fully accomplished and fully known. How many events must take place, and how many years roll away, before the Jews shall be brought in, all false religions destroyed, the millennium commence and terminate, and the final judgment sit and continue, we know not. These are circumstances not predicted; but the events predicted shall certainly come to pass.

4. It appears from the design of prophecy, that the fulfilment of every divine prediction is an infallible and increasing evidence of the truth and divinity of the Bible, which contains the prophecies which have been fulfilled. God is the only being in the universe, who is able to foresee and foretell future events. He expressly claims this prerogative. He says, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." God has been pleased to foretell many future events, and has recorded his predictions in his word; and it is only to open the Bible and read his predictions, and then compare them with the relation which sacred and profane historians have given of events, in order to determine whether any of those predictions have been fulfilled; and, if we find they have been fulfilled, we discover an infallible evidence of the divine inspiration of the scriptures. None, who have read the Bible carefully and intelligently, can deny that some of the most important predictions in it have been fulfilled. Did God foretell the coming, life and death of Christ? These events have taken place. Did God foretell the infidelity and dispersion of the Jews? These events have come to pass. Did God foretell the spread of the gospel, the destruction of the seven churches of Asia, the rise of Popish and Mohammedan impostures and delusions, and the savage state and character of the descendants of Ham and Ishmael? These events have actually and visibly taken place. These events have been

brought about in succession, and one has been evidently instrumental of another, and the accomplishment of one prediction has been a corroborating evidence of the truth of another. And this chain of evidence in favor of divine revelation is continually lengthening, and becoming more and more forcible and irresistible. There is but one kind of evidence more infallible and conclusive in support of the inspiration of the scriptures, and that is, the evidence of miracles, which were wrought as credentials to the inspired writers. Miracles are a direct testimony of God himself, that he inspired the prophets and apostles to write his predictions of future events. Miracles and predictions are the two fundamental supports of divine revelation. Were all other sources of evidence removed, these are alone sufficient to justify all who read the Bible to believe that it came from God, and could not come from any other being in the universe.

5. It appears from what has been said, that the criminality of unbelief has been continually increasing from Adam to this day. Though Adam was a believer in divine revelation, yet it seems that Cain was not. Though the patriarchs were believers, yet the great mass of mankind were unbelievers, from Cain to Abraham. Though some of the seed of Abraham were believers till the coming of Christ, yet the rest of the world, and most of Abraham's descendants were unbelievers. Though there have been many individuals since Christ's day, who have been believers, yet the great majority of mankind still remain unbelievers. And the present unbelievers are, of all others, the most inexcusable and criminal for their speculative and experimental unbelief. For they are acquainted with the predictions recorded in the Bible, many of which have been signally fulfilled, and are now visibly fulfilling. A full blaze of light has been shining in their eyes all their days, which they have obstinately resisted. And there is nothing that aggravates so fast, and so much, as resisting the light of truth. Our Saviour says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." He said of the Jews, "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated, both me and my father." And again he said, "Wo unto thee Chorazin! wo unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and

Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you." Infidelity in Europe and America, is, of all others, the most aggravated sin, and will draw after it the most aggravated condemnation. The bare knowledge of the Bible, whether it be obtained by preaching, or by reading, will either save the believer, or condemn and destroy the unbeliever. All under the gospel are in the most favorable, and yet the most dangerous circumstances. They are shut up to the faith, and must either believe and be saved, or disbelieve and be damned. And how long God will allow them to live in this interesting state of trial, they know not. Their duty is plain, urgent, and infinitely important.

6. It appears from the nature and design of prophecy, that God will finally have the glory of all his works. For by his predictions, and the accomplishment of them, it will appear that his heart and hand had been concerned in bringing about not only all the events that had been predicted, but all other events, which were inseparably connected with predicted events. It will finally appear that God had as constantly and universally governed all events in the moral world, as in the natural world. So that all the holiness and happiness which had been produced by the creation, the government, and redemption of the world, must be primarily and supremely ascribed to the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God. Besides, the accomplishment of divine predictions will clearly discover, not only the heart and hand of God in all events, but the heart and hand of every man, and of every intelligent creature, in what they had done, as instruments of fulfilling divine predictions. After Christ was glorified, his disciples remembered the prophecy that had been fulfilled, and their own free and voluntary conduct in fulfilling it. And this will be the result of all divine predictions after they are accomplished. When all the predictions contained in the Bible shall have been fulfilled, they will show to the whole intelligent universe what concern God had, and what concern his creatures had, in bringing about all the holiness and happiness of heaven. And it is of infinite importance that the character and conduct of man, and of all other intelligent beings, should be fully unfolded. For both the conduct of God and of his creatures will finally contribute to the supreme glory of God. It was no diminution of Solomon's glory, that he built the temple by the instrumentality of his own servants. And so it will be no diminution of the glory of God, that he has employed the agency of his creatures to accomplish his wise and holy designs. Hence it follows that God will, by the accomplishment of his predictions, promote his own glory, and the good of the universe, to the highest degree.

7. It appears from the design of prophecy, that it will throw

the weight of the whole intelligent universe in favor of the friends, and in opposition to the enemies of God. Every event which ever has taken place, or ever will take place, will promote the happiness of the righteous, and the final misery of the unrighteous. Every person in the world stands inseparably connected with all holy and unholy beings, and must feel the weight of their influence, in his favor or against him. Individuals have always felt the influence of public favors, and public evils, in this world, and this will be the case in the world to come. The final state of the holy will sensibly and eternally affect the state of the unholy, and the final state of the unholy will eternally affect the state of the holy. This being true, it is the most serious and important question that every person can put to himself, whether he is holy or unholy. When all God's predictions are fulfilled, it will fix all mankind in an unchangeable state of holiness and happiness, or in an unchangeable state of unholiness, unhappiness and misery. Divine predictions now hang over the world, containing vials of mercy, and vials of wrath; and how soon their contents will be poured upon the world, we know not; but when they are, we shall feel them either in time or eternity.

SERMON IV.

TRUE KNOWLEDGE THE FOUNDATION OF TRUE LOVE.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. — Philippians, i. 9.

Philippi was a chief city in Macedonia, whither Paul was called to preach the gospel by a vision, in which "there stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us." Paul obeyed this heavenly vision, and went to Philippi, where he preached the gospel, and converted Lydia, the Jailer and others, whom he formed into a Christian church. Though the members of this church were few in number, yet they sustained a most excellent character; and the apostle wrote this epistle to them, not so much to reprove them, as to commend them for their growth in knowledge and every Christian grace. He addresses them in language of high approbation and esteem. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." There can be no doubt but these Philippian christians both knew and loved God. And what was true of them is equally true of all other real christians, which warrants us to say,

That the true love which christians exercise towards God, is founded in the true knowledge of God. I shall,

I. Consider what we are to understand by christians' having the true knowledge of God;

II. Show how they gain the true knowledge of God; and,

III. Show that their love to God is founded in their true knowledge of God.

I. Let us consider what we are to understand by christians' having the true knowledge of God. It is readily conceded that this cannot mean that christians have a full and comprehensive knowledge of God. For none by searching can find out God; none can find out the Almighty unto perfection. No created beings ever have had, or ever can have a full and comprehensive knowledge of their uncreated, self existent, independent, almighty, and infinite Creator. Neither men nor angels are capable of acquiring, or even of receiving a full and comprehensive knowledge of God. Nor can we conceive it to be possible, for God to make beings capable of having a full and comprehensive knowledge of himself. For none but a Deity can comprehend a Deity. It is not to be supposed, therefore, that christians ever had, or ever can have a full and comprehensive knowledge of God. But there may be a true knowledge of God, which is not a full and comprehensive knowledge of him. The difference between a perfect knowledge of God and a true knowledge of God is very plain and intelligible. A perfect knowledge of God implies a knowledge of all things which are true concerning God; but a true knowledge of God implies the knowledge of some things only which are true concerning God. Though men do not know every thing that is true in respect to any created object, yet they know something that is true in respect to some created objects. Though men do not know every thing that is true in respect to matter or mind, yet they know something that is true in respect to both matter and mind. And what they do know that is true, in respect to either matter or mind, is as real and true knowledge, as if they knew every thing concerning these objects. So what christians know that is true concerning God, is as true knowledge, as if they knew every thing concerning God. They know that it is true that God is self existent, or that he exists of himself, without any external cause of his existence; though they do not know the ground of his self existence. They know that God is eternal, or never had a beginning of existence; though they do not know the ground of his eternal existence. They know that God is omnipotent, or that he has almighty power; though they do not know the ground of his almighty power. They know that he is omniscient, or that he knows

all things that can be known; though they do not know the ground of his knowing all things. They know that he is omnipresent, or that he fills the whole circle of creation with his constant presence; though they do not know the ground of his constant and universal presence. They know that he is perfectly benevolent, or has no mixture of malevolence in his heart; though they do not know the ground of his unmixed goodness. They know that he is perfectly just, and has no mixture of injustice in his heart; though they do not know the ground of his unmixed justice. They know that he is perfectly merciful, or as merciful as any being can be; though they do not know the ground of his infinite mercy. The knowledge which christians have of these things that are true concerning God, is as real and true knowledge of God, as if they knew all things concerning God, or could completely comprehend his being and perfections.

Again, christians know something about the mode of God's existence. They know that he exists a Trinity in Unity; though they cannot comprehend the ground of this mode of existence. They know that there is a personal distinction in his nature, which lays a foundation for his being called Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They know that the Father has the personal properties of understanding, willing, and acting; that the Son has the personal properties of understanding, willing, and acting; and that the Holy Ghost has the personal properties of understanding, willing, and acting. They know these things which are true concerning God's mode of existence; and their knowledge of these things which are true concerning his mode of existence, is as real and true knowledge, as if they could completely comprehend every thing about the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. A partial knowledge of any object is as real knowledge, as the perfect knowledge of it. The partial knowledge of the magnitude of the largest mountain is as real knowledge as the perfect knowledge of the magnitude of a mole hill. A partial knowledge of the sun, moon and stars, is as real knowledge, as a full and comprehensive knowledge of all those great and distant objects. No man knows every thing about any thing that exists. No man knows every thing about himself, nor every thing about his fellow creatures, nor every thing about the world in which he lives, nor about Him who made the world. But every man knows something about himself, and something about his fellow creatures, and something about the world in which he lives, and something about Him who made the world. And this something which he knows about all these objects, is as real knowledge, as if he knew every thing about them. Now it is easy to see what we are to

understand by christians' having the true knowledge of God. We are to understand nothing more nor less by it, than their knowing some things which are true concerning God; though they cannot comprehend the ground of his self existence, nor the ground of his natural and moral perfections, nor the ground of his existing a Trinity in Unity. I now proceed to show,

II. How christians gain this true, though partial knowledge of God. Here then I would observe,

1. That they gain some true knowledge of God by the light of nature. The apostle points out this as one source of the true knowledge of God. He represents the heathen as deriving some true knowledge of God from the works of creation. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." David also represents the light of nature as teaching the true knowledge of God. He says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language, where their voice is not heard." All christians derive some true knowledge of the being and perfections of God from the works of creation, which exhibit clear and incontestible evidence of his existence, of his omnipotence, of his omniscience, of his omnipresence, and of his pure and universal goodness. Christians cannot seriously and attentively contemplate upon themselves, and the objects around them, without gaining some true knowledge of the being and perfections of their Creator. Nor can they seriously and attentively contemplate the works of providence, without gaining more true knowledge of the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of the world. God displays himself more clearly by his works of providence, than by his works of creation. It must be allowed, however, that there are many important things concerning God, of which christians cannot gain the knowledge by the works of creation and providence, or what is called the light of nature. And this leads me to observe,

2. That christians gain their knowledge of God, principally, from divine revelation which is contained in the sacred scriptures. These were given by divine inspiration, and teach the deep things of God, which cannot be discovered by the light of nature. Peter tells us, "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And Paul tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." These holy scriptures teach all things which are necessary to make men wise unto salvation. They teach what men ought to believe concerning God, and what duty he requires of men. They teach the knowledge of the character, perfections, designs, and government of God. They teach the knowledge of the mysterious mode of the divine existence in three persons. They teach the knowledge of the personal properties of these three divine persons. They teach the knowledge of the covenant of redemption, in which each person in the Godhead engaged to perform a distinct part in carrying that design into execution. They teach the knowledge of the incarnation of Christ, by which he took human nature into a mysterious and personal union with the divine. They teach the knowledge of Christ's sufferings and death on the cross, to make atonement for the sins of the world. They teach the knowledge of the terms of salvation, and of the duty of sinners to comply with the terms of the gospel. They teach the knowledge of the danger of rejecting the condescending terms of pardoning mercy. They teach the knowledge of a future state beyond the grave, in which the souls of men will be happy or miserable for ever. Now all christians gain more or less true knowledge of these great and deep things of God from his word, where they are taught in a plain and intelligible language, which they can and do understand as well as the language of any other book they read. They can understand God speaking in their own language, as well as they can understand one another, speaking in their own language. Though God cannot tell them, in any language, all things about himself, yet he can tell them some things about himself, in their own language which they can understand. And when they look into his word, they find that he has actually told them, in their own language, something about his existing from eternity; something about his existing in three persons; something about his own person; something about the person of his Son; something about the person of the Holy Ghost; something about their distinct personal properties, excellences, and perfections; something about their united and ultimate design, in creation, providence, and redemption; something about the means of carrying this design into execution; and something about his own perfect blessedness as one God in three persons. Though God has told them something about real mysteries in his word, but not every thing, yet they can understand whatever he has told them about real mysteries, as well as whatever he has told them about themselves, or any other creature or object in nature.

Thus it appears that christians may and do gain the knowledge of some things that are true concerning God, both by his works and by his word; and this is as true and real knowledge of God, as if he had revealed, and they understood, every thing about his existence, perfections, purposes and works. It now only remains to show,

III. That their true love to God is founded in their true knowledge of God. The apostle plainly supposes that the Philippian christians had actually exercised true love to God, and that their true love was founded in their true knowledge of him. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Their love had abounded, and abounded in knowledge, and in all judgment. They had loved God for those supreme excellences which he had exhibited in his works and word. And what was true of the Philippians, is true of all real christians. They do not love nor worship an *unknown* God. They know and love the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. They love God for what they know concerning him, and not for what they do not know concerning him. Their love to God springs from a true knowledge of his being, perfections, designs, and government; and not from their ignorance of these things. Knowledge, and not ignorance, is the mother of their devotion. This will appear, if we consider,

1. That if christians should love God for what is not true concerning him, and what they do not know to be true concerning him, they would love a false character of God; which would not be true, but false love. It would be the same as loving a false god, which is the essence of idolatry. The heathen love and worship false gods, whom they know not, and cannot know, because they do not exist, but are only imaginary objects, and, according to their imaginary ideas of them, are very odious and detestable objects; so that their supreme homage is the grossest idolatry. It is indeed idolatry to love any created being supremely, however virtuous and amiable he may be; but it is gross idolatry to love any sinful creature supremely. There have been, and are now, as gross idolaters among those who call themselves christians, as among heathens. For those who call themselves christians often have as false ideas of the true God, as heathens have of their false gods; and they love the true God for the same reasons that heathens love their idols. They are, therefore, guilty of as real idolatry as the heathens are. The true love, therefore, which christians exercise towards the true God, is not founded in the ignorance, but in the knowledge of his true character. If their love to God were founded in ignorance and falsehood, it would

be false and criminal love. For it is criminal to love any moral character which is not morally excellent and amiable. The Philippians knew the difference between the true God, and the false gods they had worshipped.

2. It is the knowledge which christians have of the real and supreme excellency and glory of God, that lays them under moral obligation to love him supremely. If he were not supremely excellent, they would not be under moral obligation to love him supremely; or if they did not know that he is supremely excellent, they would not be under moral obligation to love him supremely. But he is supremely excellent; and christians know, by his works and word, that he is supremely excellent; and, of course, feel themselves under moral and indispensable obligations to abound in their love to him, in knowledge and in all judgment. The more they know of God, the more they feel themselves bound to love him with all their heart. The true knowledge of God is the only medium through which christians increase and abound in love to him. Hence Christ prayed to the Father for them, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Hence he appointed ministers to teach them divine knowledge. "And he gave some, apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And the apostle Peter exhorts christians to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The true love, therefore, which christians exercise towards God, is founded in their true knowledge of his glorious and amiable character.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If christians derive some true knowledge of God from his works and word, they may have some true knowledge of every doctrine which God has revealed in his word. It is generally believed and acknowledged, that there are many truths and doctrines revealed in the Bible, which all christians may understand. They are revealed so plainly, that every person may understand them, or have some true and real knowledge of them. But it is almost as generally supposed, that there are some doctrines revealed in the Bible, that no men, in this world, can really and truly understand, though they may approximate a little towards a real knowledge of them. Some make a larger and some a smaller catalogue of dark, difficult, unintelli-

gible and mysterious doctrines, which they allow are revealed in the Bible, and which they insist that no man can really and truly understand. But is it not a plain absurdity to suppose that God has revealed any thing to us in his word, concerning himself, or concerning any of his creatures, which cannot be really known by us in our present, imperfect state? If we cannot understand God, speaking to us in our own language, why should he speak to us at all? If we allow, then, that God does speak to us in his word, we must suppose that we are capable of understanding what he says, whether he says more or less, upon any subject whatever. None suppose that God has revealed all that he might have revealed upon plain subjects; and much less, that he has revealed all that he might have revealed upon more difficult, deep and abstruse subjects. But we must suppose that what he has revealed upon the darkest and deepest subjects is as easy to understand, as what he has revealed upon the plainest subjects. I will illustrate this point as clearly as I can. God has told us that he existed before the foundation of the world; that is, before any creature or object existed, besides himself; which means his existing from eternity. This is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us how he existed from eternity. God has told us that he created the world and all that is in it; which is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us how he created all things, or brought them out of nothing into existence. God has told us that he hath hung the earth upon nothing; which is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us how he upholds, or supports it every moment. God has told us that he governs all things; which is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us how he governs all things. God has told us that he constantly fills heaven and earth and all places with his presence; which is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us how he fills the universe with his presence. God has told us that he has decreed all things; which is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us what and how many things he has decreed. God has told us that he is absolutely immutable; which is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us what is the ground of his immutability. God has told us that he works in men both to will and to do; which is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us how he constantly produces all their free and voluntary exercises. God has told us that he is one God, but exists in three distinct persons, each of whom has the properties of understanding, willing and acting; which is a plain and important truth, though he has not told us what there is in his nature that lays a foundation for this personal distinction.

Now just so much as God has told us in his word concerning his existing from eternity, his creating the world, his upholding the world, his governing the world, his filling the world with his presence, his decreeing all things, his perfect immutability, his operating upon the hearts of men, and his existing a Trinity in Unity, is as easy to be understood and certainly known, as any thing he has revealed concerning less obscure and profound subjects. Whatever he has revealed in the Bible, he has revealed in the plain and intelligible language of men, who are capable of understanding the true meaning of every word which he has used, upon every subject about which he has revealed any thing. It is reasonable to suppose that God has not revealed any thing in his word which we cannot understand, but it is absurd to suppose that he has revealed any thing in his word which we cannot understand. It is certain to a demonstration, that if we cannot understand what he reveals upon the most profound subjects, we cannot understand what he reveals upon the plainest subjects. It is a contradiction in terms, to say that he *reveals* any thing in our language which we cannot understand, nor express properly in our own language. For, on this supposition, he does not reveal any thing. Nothing can be *revealed* to us, which no human language can express. The supposition that we cannot understand all that God has actually revealed concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, casts a mist, a cloud, and complete darkness, over all the doctrines of the Bible. It is absurd for any man to undertake to defend the doctrine of the Trinity, and at the same time tell us that neither he nor any body else can understand what God has actually revealed upon that mysterious subject. God has told us that he created men, that his Son died to redeem men, and that the Holy Ghost sanctifies the hearts of men. This implies that he is a person, or agent, and that his Son is a person, or agent, and that the Holy Ghost is a person, or agent. And it is as absurd to deny that the Father is a person, or that the Son is a person, or that the Holy Ghost is a person, because they are not called persons in the Bible, as to deny that God is a moral agent, because he does not call himself a moral agent; or as to deny that mankind are moral agents, because God calls them men, and not moral agents. These observations will apply to every doctrine which God has revealed in the Bible in human language; for they can all be understood and explained, by different words in the same language in which they are revealed.

2. If christians can understand whatever God has revealed in his word concerning himself or any of his creatures, then there is a propriety in preaching upon any truth, or doctrine,

that God has revealed in the Bible. We often hear it said that there are some doctrines revealed in the Bible that ought never to be preached; such as the doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ; the doctrine of decrees; the doctrine of election; the doctrine of divine agency in the production of moral exercises in the hearts of men; and the doctrine of the future and eternal punishment of the finally impenitent; and many other doctrines. It is said that such doctrines as these, though revealed in the Bible, are too dark, profound, or mysterious, to be explained, proved and defended, by the fallible preachers of the gospel. But is not this a groundless and hurtful opinion? If christians may have a true knowledge of what God has revealed in his word, then it seems that Christian ministers may have a true knowledge of whatever doctrine God has revealed in the gospel; and, consequently, that they may and ought to explain, prove and defend whatever doctrine they find God has actually revealed. That is to say, they ought to explain, prove and defend *so much* concerning any doctrine as God has revealed, and no more. If he has revealed something concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, they ought to explain, prove, and defend that something. If he has revealed something concerning the doctrine of decrees, election and reprobation, they ought to explain, prove and defend that something. If he has revealed something concerning the doctrine of the divine and human nature of Christ, they ought to explain, prove and defend that something. If he has revealed something concerning divine agency, future punishment, or any other doctrine of the gospel, they ought to explain, prove and defend that something. But though ministers ought to explain, prove and defend what God has revealed in his word, yet they ought never to attempt to explain, or prove, or defend what he has not revealed in his word, and what, for that reason, is really mysterious. There is, however, a wide difference between what is merely difficult, and what is really mysterious, respecting the revealed doctrines of the gospel. And it is the proper duty and business of ministers to point out this difference, by explaining what is difficult, and distinguishing a difficulty from a mystery. And it is, in all cases, easy and practicable to discover and point out and remove a difficulty, and make it appear to be no mystery. And when they have done this, in respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, or the doctrine of decrees, or any other doctrine, concerning which God has not revealed so much as he might have revealed, they have done what they ought to do. Ministers may go just as far as revelation goes, and not a step farther, in explaining, proving and defending any doctrine of the gospel.

3. If christians may have a true knowledge of whatever God has revealed concerning any doctrine of the Bible, then they have no right to disbelieve and reject any doctrine of the Bible, merely because there is something really mysterious in it. If we may disbelieve whatever has something mysterious in it, we may disbelieve every thing that exists. On this principle, we may disbelieve our own existence; for there is something in our own existence which is mysterious, and which we cannot comprehend. We may disbelieve the existence of all our fellow creatures; for there is something mysterious in their existence which we cannot comprehend. We may disbelieve the existence of the world in which we live; for there is something mysterious in its existence, which we cannot comprehend. We may disbelieve the existence of the Deity; for there is something mysterious in his existence, which we cannot comprehend. But though there is something mysterious in all these, and in all other beings, creatures and objects, that exist, which we cannot comprehend; yet there is something that is not mysterious, but plain and intelligible, in them all. And it would be absurd to disbelieve what is plain and intelligible, on account of what is mysterious. And it is equally absurd for christians to disbelieve any, or all the doctrines of the gospel, because there is really something mysterious in them; when, at the same time, there is something plain and intelligible in them. For they may come to the true knowledge of what is plain and intelligible in them, either by the light of nature, or by the light of divine revelation, or by the light of both. How many are there at this day, who professedly disbelieve and reject the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of election, and many other essential doctrines of the gospel, because they discover something mysterious in them! Mystery is the great stumbling block which heretics, deists and skeptics are throwing in the way of christians, for the purpose of involving them in doubts and darkness respecting all the doctrines of the gospel. Common christians ought to stand upon their guard, and steadfastly turn a deaf ear to such deceivers and seducers. Their sophistry is both absurd and criminal, though they may have deceived themselves by it.

4. If christians can come to the certain knowledge of what God has revealed concerning the doctrines of the gospel, then those who have gained this certain knowledge, ought to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Those who are superficial and lax in their religious sentiments, are loudly exclaiming against religious disputes. They say that neither side in a dispute know that they are right; they can only approximate towards the truth; nobody certainly knows it, respecting any doctrine of the gospel. If this were true, it

would be vain and absurd to dispute upon religious subjects. But it has been, perhaps, sufficiently shown that christians may come to the real, certain knowledge of what God has revealed, concerning the doctrines of the gospel. And those who have this knowledge of what God has revealed, may know that they have it; and when they know the truth, and know that they know it, it is their duty to contend earnestly for it. Unitarians are crying peace, peace, when there is no peace; and moderate men, on all sides, are crying peace, peace, when there is no peace. It is while men sleep, that the enemy sows tares. Corrupters always wish to throw christians off their guard. There were never, perhaps, more corrupters of the gospel, than at the present day. Now is the proper time to put on the Christian armor, and fight the good fight of faith; which has always been defended and promoted by religious disputes.

5. If christians may come to the knowledge of God and divine truth, then they will have no excuse for their religious errors. Many believe and maintain that religious errors are very innocent and harmless. They suppose that men may be saved, notwithstanding any religious errors they imbibe, if they are only sincere in the belief of their errors; that is, if they really believe them to be the truth. But the Bible represents gross error as not only dangerous, but absolutely destructive. We read of those who were under delusion to believe a lie, that they might be damned. And we read that error doth eat as a canker. Error is like poison; to imbibe the smallest potion of it will be injurious; and a large potion of it will be eventually and eternally destructive. The most gross religious errors were never more zealously and artfully propagated than at the present day; by which the souls of thousands and millions are exposed to endless destruction. The propagators of errors first endeavor to make men believe that no errors are dangerous, and especially those they wish to propagate. And this opinion, that it is no matter what religious sentiments men believe and embrace, is the most dangerous of all errors; because it opens the door to all other errors imperceptibly. Men do not at once see the width of this door, and the consequences of entering into it. But those who trust in the innocency of error, will be sooner or later awfully disappointed. Paul once trusted in his sincere errors until he was well nigh destroyed. The Scribes and Pharisees persisted in their belief of fatal errors, which shut them out of the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly Christ told his followers, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

6. This subject calls upon all to inquire whether their love to God is founded in knowledge and in all judgment. All men, without scarcely an exception, think and say that they love God. Deists do, Unitarians do, Arminians do, Antinomians do, Universalists do, and all professors of religion do. But the great question is, whether their love to God is founded in the true knowledge of him. Do they love God for what he has revealed of himself in his word? Do they love him for being what he is? for existing in the manner he does? for the designs he has formed, and is executing; and for his ultimate end in creation, which is his own glory in the highest holiness and happiness of the intelligent system? They who truly love God, love him for his own infinite greatness and goodness. And they rejoice that he "hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil;" and that he has, for his own glory, foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Let every person, then, carefully and candidly inquire and know whether he truly loves the only living and true God, who says, "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things." And may the love of real christians, who truly know and love God, "abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Amen.

SERMON V.

THE DEATH OF SINNERS NOT PLEASING TO GOD.

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Ezekiel, xviii. 32.

There has long been a controversy between God and sinners. They have complained of him for his conduct towards them; and he has complained of them for their conduct towards him. In this chapter he condescends to state the controversy between him and them, and to show them plainly, that they have no reason to complain of him, but that he has good reason to complain of them. He demands, "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die." After this declaration, he goes on to say that he always has treated and always will treat every man according to his real character. If a man were righteous, he would treat him as righteous, whether his father were righteous or not; and if a man were wicked, he would treat him as wicked, whether his father were wicked or not. So that the son should not bear the iniquity of the father, neither the father the iniquity of the son: "the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." But this would not silence the complaints of the wicked. They would yet say, "The way of the Lord is not equal." God therefore appeals from their reason to their conscience. "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways

unequal?" He then solemnly assures them that, notwithstanding their guilt and obstinacy, he had rather they should be for ever happy, than for ever miserable. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." The plain import of these words is this:

That God is so far from being willing that any of mankind should die, that he sincerely desires that all should live. I shall,

I. Consider what is here to be understood by men's dying;

II. Show that God is unwilling that any should die; And,

III. Show that he sincerely desires that all should live.

I. We are to consider what is to be understood, in the text and this discourse, by men's dying.

The scripture mentions three kinds of death; temporal death, spiritual death, and eternal death. Temporal death is the dissolution of the connection between the soul and body. Spiritual death is the total corruption or depravity of the heart. Eternal death is complete and endless misery in a future state. Temporal death is a common calamity, which none can escape. It is appointed unto all men once to die; dust they are, and unto dust they must return. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Spiritual death is as universal as temporal. By nature all men are dead in trespasses and sins, and under the entire dominion of an evil heart. But eternal death is peculiar to the finally impenitent. Though all men deserve eternal death, yet none but the finally impenitent shall suffer eternal misery. These reject the counsel of God against themselves, practically judge themselves unworthy of eternal life, and must suffer the second death, which is the full and proper wages of sin. As soon as they leave this world, they will go into a state of everlasting separation and alienation from God, where he will pour out the vials of his wrath upon them, without mixture and without end. Neither temporal nor spiritual death is an adequate punishment for sin; but eternal death, or everlasting misery, is a just and proper reward for final impenitence and unbelief. And this is what God threatens when he says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" and when he says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." I proceed to show,

II. That God is really unwilling that any of mankind should suffer eternal death. This appears,

1. From the plain and positive declarations concerning the final state of impenitent sinners, which are every where to be found in his word. He plainly and unequivocally says in the text, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." This declaration he confirms with the solemnity of an oath. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the

wicked." God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Though he was justly and highly displeased with his sinful people, yet he assures them that he was extremely reluctant to punish them according to their deserts. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man." And the apostle declares that "the Lord is long suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." These strong and positive declarations are to be understood in their most plain and literal sense, as expressing the real feelings of God's heart in respect to the future state of the impenitent. He means to tell all the world that he takes no pleasure in the misery of his most guilty and ill-deserving creatures; and that he feels a strong reluctance, simply considered, to inflict that punishment upon them which they justly deserve, and which his supreme regard to the good of the universe requires him to inflict. And this is farther confirmed,

2. By the pure, disinterested and universal benevolence of his nature. God is love. His love is universal. It extends to the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, and to all mankind, whether high or low, whether good or evil. Such pure, impartial and universal benevolence, renders it morally impossible that he should take pleasure in the pain or misery of any sensitive nature. While he feels perfectly benevolent towards all mankind, it is utterly impossible that he should desire, or take pleasure in, the pain or punishment of any human being, simply considered. He has a far more clear and just view of the future and eternal punishment of the wicked than they have, or any other created being has; and such endless misery appears to him infinitely more disagreeable, in its own nature, than it does to those who are suffering it. The spirits in prison have but a faint idea of a boundless eternity, in comparison with him who inhabits eternity. God views every impenitent sinner as exposed to eternal torments; and while he views him in that light, he takes no pleasure in the dreadful prospect. He views the impenitent, while preparing for destruction, as infinitely different from the malignant deceiver, who goes about seeking whom he may destroy. Satan takes a real pleasure in destroying sinners and in seeing them destroyed. But God, the Father of mercies, has no such malignant feelings towards the most rebellious and vile of the human race. Their pain or misery, simply considered, never did, and never will give him the least pleasure, or gratification. The perfect benevolence of his heart demon-

strates the sincerity of all his declarations concerning his unwillingness that any should perish. There is not a child in his family, or a subject in his kingdom, that he is willing should die the second death and lie down in everlasting sorrow. All souls are his, and all souls are precious in his sight. He views them as unspeakably more important than they view themselves, and looks upon the loss of one single soul as far more dreadful than the sinner looks upon it, and is far more unwilling, simply considered, to destroy him, than he is to be destroyed. This leads me to show,

III. That God is not only unwilling that any should be lost, but sincerely desires that all should be saved. Here it may be observed,

1. That if God be unwilling that any should die, then he must desire that all may live. He cannot be altogether indifferent about the happiness or misery of his rational and immortal creatures. If the pure benevolence of his nature makes him unwilling that any should perish, then the same benevolence must make him desire that all should be saved. God must be as desirous that sinners should be saved, as he is unwilling that they should be lost. Accordingly, he tells us so in his word. He expresses both his unwillingness that sinners should die, and his desire that they should live. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." He uses the same mode of expression on this subject, in other parallel passages. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" And when he declares that he is not willing that any should perish, he immediately subjoins, "but that all should come to repentance." The salvation of every sinner is desirable in its own nature; and therefore God sincerely desires that every sinner should be saved. And his desire that all should be saved is impartial; he desires the eternal good of every individual of mankind, according to his real worth and importance. Good men desire the future good of all, simply considered; but yet they are often very partial in their desires, and more ardently wish that they and theirs may be saved, than that others of much greater importance in the scale of being may be saved. But God views and values all men with perfect impartiality, and sincerely desires the good of all in time and eternity, according to their various capacities for doing and enjoying good. This desire of the everlasting happiness of all mankind is essential to his nature; and he must cease to be God, before he can cease to desire that all men might be saved.

2. That God desires that all may escape misery and enjoy happiness in a future state, clearly appears from his providing a Saviour for all. He sent his Son to seek and save them that are lost. He gave him to be a ransom for all and to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He caused him to taste death for every man. He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. His providing such a glorious and divine Saviour for all mankind, was the strongest expression of his benevolence towards them that he could exhibit. It was not only morally, but naturally impossible for him to give a higher testimony of his sincere and ardent desire to save the whole fallen and guilty race of Adam. And so it was viewed by the heavenly hosts, who appeared and announced the advent of Christ. They said in their song of praise on that joyful occasion, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." God's love in sending his Son to suffer and die for the sins of the world, could arise from no other source than his sincere and ardent desire to save them from eternal death, and raise them to eternal life. Hence says the apostle, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: — But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God saw no moral excellence in mankind to excite his complacency towards them. It was therefore entirely owing to his mere self moving goodness, that he sent his Son to redeem them from sin and death, and raise them to life and happiness.

3. It appears from the invitations which God makes to sinners in the gospel, that he desires all should be saved. These invitations are universal, and extend to all sinners of every age, character and condition, who are capable of understanding them. The evangelical prophet cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Our Saviour invited all, without exception, to come to him for life. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." And in the great and last day of the feast, "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Christ commanded his apostles and their successors in the ministry, to make the same offers of salvation to all, without exception. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." And the gospel closes with this general invitation to sinners. "The Spirit and the

bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." These universal invitations to sinners, to come and partake of all the blessings which God has provided for them by the sufferings and death of Christ, afford a strong and undeniable evidence that God really desires the salvation of every individual sinner. Neither his wisdom, nor goodness, nor veracity, would allow him to make such universal offers of salvation, unless he really desired that all should accept of pardoning mercy. If he did not desire, simply considered, that any should be saved, but only such as eventually will be saved, it seems that he could not, with any propriety or sincerity, make the offer of salvation to all, without any limitation, or exception.

4. It farther appears that God sincerely desires the salvation of all men, from his commanding all to embrace the gospel and live. He never commands any thing but what is agreeable to him, in its own nature. If it were not agreeable to him, in its own nature, that sinners should repent, believe, and love the gospel, he would not command them to do it. He never commands men to sin, because that is in its own nature disagreeable to him; and he never commands them to die, or to destroy themselves, because that is in its own nature disagreeable to him. But he does repeatedly and solemnly command them to repent, believe and live. He says, "Turn yourselves and live ye." He also says, "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Our Lord called upon all to whom he preached the gospel, to repent and believe. And the apostle says, "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." Yea, God not only commands, but tenderly and solemnly exhorts sinners universally, to turn from sin and escape the wrath to come. "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" All the warnings, admonitions and exhortations, as well as commands, which God has given to sinners in the Bible, are so many proofs of his sincere and ardent desires that they should seek and secure the salvation of their souls. They flow from his benevolent heart, and manifest how greatly he feels interested in their eternal welfare. Besides,

5. The patience and forbearance of God towards sinners, is a very clear and convincing evidence that he greatly desires that they should be saved rather than destroyed. If God took any pleasure in the death of the wicked, he would not delay so long to punish them. Though he has prepared his instruments of death, and could with infinite ease let loose his hands upon them and crush them in a moment, yet he endures them with much long suffering, not willing that they should perish, but

come to repentance and be saved. He waits to be gracious not only upon a few of the least guilty, but upon the most guilty and obstinate sinners. He waited a long time to be gracious to Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus while they were spreading misery and destruction all around them, and exerting all their false zeal in opposing his cause and kingdom. Nor is this all. He not only waits upon sinners to turn and live, but uses the most powerful and best adapted means to prevent their ruining themselves; which shows that his patience flows from a tender and benevolent regard for their final salvation. He treats them just as he would treat them, if he were sincerely and deeply concerned for their future and eternal happiness. His whole conduct towards them is a lively and striking manifestation of his unwillingness that they should be lost, and of his ardent desire that they should be saved. There appears no truth in the Bible more clearly revealed, nor more strongly confirmed, than God's benevolent and sincere desire that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, escape the wrath which is to come, and lay hold of eternal life. He has provided salvation for them. He has freely and universally offered salvation to them, and commanded them to accept it. What more could he have done, that he has not done, by way of means, to make them believe and feel that he sincerely desires their salvation?

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God be so far from being willing that any of mankind should be lost, that he sincerely desires that all should be saved, then he always did and always will feel as much benevolence towards those who are lost, as towards those who are saved. There can be no doubt whether God did not feel as much benevolence towards Lucifer before he rebelled, as towards Gabriel. We have reason to suppose that he was every way equal to Gabriel. His intellectual powers were equal. His capacity for knowledge, holiness, happiness and usefulness were equal. He was as great, as good and valuable a being as Gabriel; and God felt as much benevolence and complacency towards him, as towards Gabriel, before he became an enemy and rebel. Though then, indeed, he was no longer an object of the divine complacency, yet he still remained an object of divine benevolence. God saw all the good he had lost, and all the misery he would endure through interminable ages, in which he never did and never will take any pleasure. He had no pleasure in his death, before he died, nor since he died; and therefore feels as truly benevolent towards him as ever he did. And as God feels as benevolent towards the disobedient, as towards the obe-

dient angels, so he feels as benevolent towards those that will be finally lost, as towards those that will be finally saved. He will feel as much benevolence towards the finally miserable in another world, as he felt in this. We have seen that he feels benevolent towards the vilest sinners in this world; and they will be as proper objects of his benevolence after they leave this world, as they were before. And no reason can be seen why he should not feel the same benevolence towards them while he is punishing them, as while he was fitting them for punishment. The righteous and benevolent judge feels as benevolent towards the criminal whom he condemns, after he has condemned him, as he did before. And shall not the righteous and benevolent Judge of all the earth feel as benevolent towards those whom he has consigned to endless misery, after his condemnation of them as before? And an irresistible conviction of his benevolence towards them, will give a peculiar weight and emphasis to their final condemnation.

2. If God is so far from being willing that any of mankind should be lost, that he sincerely desires that all should be saved, then it is easy to see how his love of benevolence towards them should be entirely consistent with his hatred of them. This appears to many a great paradox. They cannot reconcile his declarations of love to them, with his declarations of displeasure towards them. But it is plain that a being of perfect benevolence must desire the good of sinners more than any other being; and for the same reason he must hate their sinful and odious characters more than any other being. Though Satan has no benevolence to sinners, yet he does not hate them so much as God does. The more God desires the good of sinners, the more he hates their totally corrupt hearts and selfish conduct. He knows that they are enemies to him and to all righteousness; that their hearts are as malignant as serpents; that the poison of asps is under their lips; that for the sake of indulging their present selfish feelings, they would sacrifice their own eternal good and the eternal good of their fellow men; and, if possible, dethrone their Creator. Such is their perfectly sinful and hateful character. But God is of purer eyes than to behold a character so deformed and depraved. The more holy he is, the more he must hate sin. The more benevolent he is, the more he must hate selfishness. The more he loves the happiness of sinners, the more he must hate them for destroying it. The more he loves the good of their fellow men, the more he must hate them for opposing it. And the more he loves his own great and amiable character, the more he must hate his malignant and mortal enemies. The same benevolence in God which disposes him to desire their everlast-

ing good, disposes them to hate him with a perfect hatred. So that his hatred of them is not only consistent with his benevolence towards them, but necessarily flows from it.

3. If God's benevolence to sinners is consistent with his hating them, then it is consistent with his punishing them for ever. As his benevolence disposes him to hate sinners, so it must dispose him to punish them. If he can hate them while he exercises benevolence towards them, then he can punish them while he exercises benevolence towards them. And if his benevolence disposes him to hate them for their sinful and odious characters in this world, it must equally dispose him to hate them for the same sinful, odious characters in the world to come. And so long as his benevolence disposes him to hate them, it cannot fail to dispose him to punish them; for punishment is the proper expression of hatred. The benevolence of a parent disposes him to hate the disobedience and obstinacy of his child, and to punish him for it. So the benevolence of the Deity disposes him to hate the disobedience and obstinacy of sinners, and to punish them for it. As the benevolence of the Deity disposes him to hate impenitent sinners for ever, so it disposes him to punish them for ever, to express his hatred of them. Pure benevolence not only may, but must dispose God to feel and conduct in this manner towards impenitent sinners. Though the finally impenitent will be the objects of his benevolence for ever, yet they will always be the objects of his displacency, disapprobation and abhorrence; and therefore he must be disposed to express his displacency, disapprobation and abhorrence of them, punishing them for ever, according to their desert. And this he expressly threatens to do. "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and reward them that hate me."

4. If God is so far from being willing that any of mankind should be lost, that he sincerely desires that all should be saved, then he will do as much to save all, as he can do, consistently with his benevolence. His benevolence is entirely disinterested; and disposes him to seek the highest good of the universe supremely, and forbids him to do any thing for any particular person or object, which is inconsistent with his promoting his supreme and ultimate object. But his pure benevolence towards every one of mankind disposes him to do as much to save every one of them as it is morally possible for him to do, without neglecting or obstructing his supreme and ultimate design. He saw it to be consistent with his universal benevolence to provide a Saviour for all men. He sees it to be consistent to offer salvation to all. He sees it to be consistent to wait upon

sinners to embrace the gospel. He sees it to be consistent to use a vast variety of means and motives to persuade sinners to comply with the offers of mercy. These things he has always been disposed to do, to save all from future and eternal misery. He did these things for Pharaoh; for the Israelites, who perished in the wilderness; for Judas; and for thousands who probably have been lost. And he will do all he can do consistently, to save sinners who are now in their probationary state. And this is all that any of them can reasonably desire him to do for them. If he should do less for one than for another, it will not be owing to his want of benevolence, but to the nature of his benevolence, which regards the good of the whole, more than the good of a part. God perfectly knows whom the good of the universe requires to be saved; and for them he will do all it is necessary for him to do, in order to raise them from spiritual death to spiritual life, and bring them home to the kingdom of glory. And with respect to those whose future and eternal happiness the good of the universe does not require, but forbids, they themselves will be fully convinced that God did as much for them as he could consistently do, and that their own negligence and obstinacy were the only faulty causes of their own ruin. They will have to blame themselves, that when God put a price into their hands to get wisdom and obtain life, they had no heart to do it, but chose death rather than life. Sinners are extremely apt to complain that God does not do enough for them, and requires them to do too much for themselves. But there is no just ground for this complaint; for it arises entirely from the selfishness of their hearts. If they were not selfish, they would see that God does as much for them as benevolence requires him to do. If they were not selfish, they would see that he requires nothing of them but what they would be willing to do, if they were benevolent. And if they were not selfish, they would see that he treats them in all respects just as he ought to treat them, and just as they would desire to be treated, if they were benevolent. If they would only exercise that benevolence which God has always exercised towards them, they would find all their objections against his character and conduct cease, and feel bound to praise him for every thing of which they now complain. They would freely acknowledge that all his ways are equal, but their own have been very unequal.

5. If God acts from the same benevolent motives in loving and in punishing finally impenitent sinners, then saints will for ever love and praise him for all his conduct towards those guilty and miserable objects. They will love and praise him for mercifully providing a Saviour for them, who suffered and

died to atone for their sins, and to open a way for their pardon and salvation. They will love and praise him for freely offering salvation to them upon the most gracious and condescending terms. They will love and praise him for giving them a day of grace and space for repentance, and using so many means for so many days and months, and years, to bring them to repentance; and all the while giving them a rich and ample supply of all temporal blessings. They will love and praise him for all his acts of kindness and benevolence towards the evil and unthankful in this world, during their whole probationary state. Nor will they be less disposed to love and praise him for giving them a just recompense of reward for all their ingratitude, enmity and opposition to him, and to all the holiness and happiness of the universe. They will see that his mercy towards them in time, and his justice towards them in eternity, are equally expressions of his pure, disinterested and universal benevolence. Being holy as God is holy, and benevolent as God is benevolent, they will feel as God feels towards those guilty and miserable objects, and love and praise him for treating them as he had treated them in time, and does treat them in eternity. And they will say, "Amen, Alleluia," while they see the smoke of their torments ascending for ever and ever. They will see that the whole of God's conduct towards them taken together, both in time and eternity, has flowed from his perfect benevolence, for which they ought to love and praise him for ever. Moses will feel that he ought to love and praise him for his whole conduct towards Pharaoh; and the eleven apostles will feel that they ought to love and praise him for his whole conduct towards Judas; and all the heavenly hosts will feel that they ought to love and praise him for all his conduct towards the spirits in prison, which has displayed the beauties of his benevolence before the eyes of the whole intelligent creation.

6. It appears from what has been said about God's willingness and desire that sinners might be saved, that they are extremely unwilling to be saved. They generally think and say that they are willing to be saved, and more willing to be saved than God is willing to save them. But what says their conduct? Does it not prove their insincerity? If they sincerely desired to be saved, would they not accept of salvation, when God has provided salvation for them, offered salvation to them, urged them to accept of it, by the most endearing and powerful motives, and removed every obstacle out of their way of obtaining eternal life, but merely their unwillingness to enjoy it? Nothing but their unwillingness to be saved has hitherto prevented their accepting of salvation, or ever can prevent their

accepting it, this side of eternity. They are not merely unwilling to be saved, but extremely unwilling to be saved. They are so unwilling, that no temporal good that God can bestow upon them, can make them willing; that no eternal good he can offer to them, can make them willing; and that no eternal evil he can threaten to them, can make them willing. They had rather die than live; they choose eternal death rather than eternal life. God has been so willing to save them, and done so much for them to demonstrate his sincere and ardent desire to save them, that he has set their unwillingness to be saved in the most visible and striking light. He has a right to ask them, and to ask the whole universe — What more could I have done to save my incorrigible enemies, that I have not done? What more could he have done for Pharaoh? What more could he have done for those whom he miraculously led through the Red Sea, and fed, and clothed, and preserved, in the dreary wilderness where they fell? What more could he have done for Judas, whom he allowed to live with Christ and his apostles? What more can he do for sinners at this day, than to preserve their lives, pour continual instructions into their minds, wait to be gracious to them, and fill their hearts and their houses with the bounties of providence? Let the conduct of sinners speak; let the conduct of God speak; and the voice of conduct will finally be heard. The conduct of God will confirm the sincerity of his solemn declaration, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." But the conduct of impenitent and incorrigible sinners will proclaim the insincerity of their pretensions, of being more willing to be saved than God was willing to save them. Hence,

7. We learn the astonishing grace of God in making any sinners willing to be saved. The grace of God, indeed, appears in every step he takes in actually saving sinners; but it appears more visible and illustrious in some steps than in others. His grace appears in giving his Son to die for sinners. His grace appears in his free and universal offers of salvation to sinners. His grace appears in the peculiar and powerful means which he uses to bring sinners to repentance. But he gives a brighter and more glorious display of his sovereign grace, in changing the hearts of sinners after they have abused all previous acts of his grace, in providing salvation for them, in offering salvation to them, in calling upon them by his word and providence to accept of salvation. It is conquering grace, which overcomes not only their unworthiness, but their unwillingness and obstinacy, at the very time they were resolved to destroy themselves. Renewing grace is, in the strictest sense,

special, irresistible grace. It demonstrates that God is infinitely more willing to save sinners than they are to be saved. It is subduing their unwillingness, and making them willing in the day of his power to be saved. It is softening the heart of one, while he is hardening the heart of another. It is forming one a vessel of honor, while he is forming another a vessel of dishonor. It is displaying the riches of his grace upon one, while he is fitting another for destruction. God's making the unwilling to be willing to be saved, is the most special, sovereign, discriminating act of grace that he ever displays in the salvation of sinners. And it ought to fill the subjects of it with the sincerest and warmest gratitude to the God of all grace.

The subject now calls upon every one to inquire, whether he has been made to experience the renewing grace of God. He has, you know, graciously provided a Saviour for you, tendered salvation to you, and gives you a day of grace and space for repentance; and perhaps, made you to see your danger and guilt. But has he made you willing to be saved?

SERMON VI.

THE NATURE AND EFFECT OF DIVINE TEACHING.

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. — JOHN, vi. 45.

THE mere outward means of religious instruction have never had a saving effect upon the minds of men. This has been verified in all ages, and in all nations of the world. The works and providence of God are proper means of religious instruction, which have been afforded to all mankind; but they have not received much knowledge of divine things from them. In addition to these means of divine instruction, God gave the Jews his word, his ordinances, his priests, and his extraordinary prophets; and yet, notwithstanding all these means of light, when our Saviour appeared among them, he found them enveloped in gross darkness. Though he referred them to plain prophecies respecting himself, yet they could not discover his character, nor perceive his divine mission. And though he plainly told them that he came into the world to save sinners, yet they could not be persuaded to come to him, and rely upon him for salvation. This, he knew, was owing to their moral impotency, which flowed from their moral depravity, and therefore he said unto them, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." But, at the same time, he informed them in the words of the text, that God could make them able and willing to come to him for life. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." These words lead us to consider two things.

I. How God teaches men; and,

II. Why those whom he teaches come to Christ.

I. Let us consider how God teaches men. The inspired writer evidently supposes that God teaches in a manner different from all other teachers. The works of God and the creatures of God may be said to teach, but yet they do not teach like God himself. He has a peculiar way of teaching, which is superior to all other teaching. To be taught of God is something very different from being taught of men. So Christ intimated to Peter, when he acknowledged his divinity. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The question then which still lies before us, is, How does God himself teach mankind? To this I answer,

1. He teaches them by bringing divine and invisible objects near to them. Men have the power of describing, but not of presenting divine and spiritual objects to the mind. Men are naturally disposed to put these objects far away out of their sight. If they think of God and of invisible and eternal realities, they do not realize their relation to them, and connection with them; but view them as objects at a great distance, with which they have little or no concern. But when God teaches men concerning himself, he draws near to them, and draws them near to himself, so that they cannot help realizing his being and presence. And when he teaches them concerning things unseen and eternal, he makes them realize that there is such a place as heaven, and such a place as hell, and that they stand upon the verge of eternity, and know not how soon they may be called into it. Men may describe the divine perfections, but God can show them to sinners. He can bring his power, his wisdom, his justice, his sovereignty, and his mercy so near to them, as to make them feel their reality and weight from day to day and from week to week. Men may describe the righteousness, holiness and goodness of the divine law. But God can bring it home to the conscience, and cause sinners to realize the infinite weight and authority of its awful sanctions. He can make them sensible that it is a living law of the ever living God, which never has been repealed or abated, but stands in full force, and clothed with all the authority of the supreme Sovereign of the universe. Men can describe the vanity of the world, and all its enjoyments. But God can show sinners the world just as it is, in comparison with the great objects of eternity, and cause them to realize that it is vanity of vanities, and lighter than a feather in contrast with eternity. Men can describe the heart and lives of sinners; but God can turn their attention inward, and make them see their hearts and lives in all their criminality and ill desert. They

naturally overlook themselves, and are strangers to their hearts and the nature of their conduct. But when God teaches them, he makes them realize the corruption of their hearts, and the criminality of their lives.

2. God teaches men, by operating upon their minds, as well as by bringing divine objects near to their view. He does both these things at once. While he brings divine objects near, he opens all the powers and faculties of their minds to attend to them. He opens their understanding to perceive clearly the truths and objects he presents to their view. As he opened the understanding of the two disciples to understand Christ's teaching, so he opens the understandings of sinners, whom he teaches the truth concerning his own character, law, and government. He makes them understand what he has said concerning himself, and concerning themselves, in his word. He causes them to realize that he is what he has said he is, and that they are what he has said they are; that he is just in requiring them to love and serve him, and that they are guilty in refusing to love and serve him; that they stand condemned by the law they have broken, and are constantly exposed to deserved destruction. He opens their understanding to perceive the full meaning of these great and solemn truths which they had often heard, but never clearly understood and regarded. He not only enlightens their understanding, but awakens their conscience to do its office; and teaches them what is right and what is wrong, what is duty and what is sin. He takes away the mists and clouds which their corrupt heart had thrown over their conscience, and makes it speak with authority, in approving and condemning according to truth. Thus he awakened the conscience of the malefactor on the cross, who had long remained stupid and blind to his own character and condition. His conscience constrained him to feel and say that he deserved both temporal and eternal death. Those who had resisted the light and truth which Christ had exhibited before them by his miracles, and by his conversation and preaching, were taught of God to see and feel their danger and guilt, by a divine influence upon their understanding and conscience. God awakened their conscience, which condemned them for their aggravated guilt in crucifying the Lord of glory, of whose person, character and gracious design, they had been voluntarily and criminally ignorant. After Paul had blindly and obstinately resisted the knowledge of Christ and of himself, God enlightened his understanding, and awakened his conscience, to know and feel the truth respecting Christ and himself; which threw him into the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. But after God

has thrown light into the understanding, and conviction into the conscience of sinners, he more effectually teaches them by operating on their heart. He has their heart in his hand, and can turn it whithersoever he pleases. When he teaches them savingly, he opens their heart to attend to and receive divine truth, as he opened the heart of Lydia. He gives them a wise and understanding heart. He gives them a spiritual discerning of spiritual things. He gives them a heart to know him. Or, as it is expressed in another place, he gives them eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to perceive. He takes away a stony heart, and gives them a heart of flesh. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness at first, shines in their heart, to give them the light of the knowledge of his own glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. The opening of the heart is the most effectual method of teaching sinners. When their heart is opened, all their other powers will do their office, and nothing is necessary for their farther instruction, but the exhibition of divine truth from time to time. When this is done, they hear and learn of the Father all that is necessary to prepare and dispose them to come to Christ. I now proceed to show,

II. Why those that are taught of God do come to Christ. They always do come to him. The scripture abounds with instances of such persons coming to Christ. The penitent and divinely taught malefactor immediately cast his eye and his heart upon Christ, and sincerely embraced him as an all sufficient Saviour. The three thousand who were taught of God on the day of Pentecost, cordially embraced their crucified Redeemer. Cornelius, who had been taught of God, was ready to receive Christ as soon as he was preached to him. Paul, who had opposed and persecuted him, trusted in him for salvation as soon as he was taught of God. Those who have been taught of God have always been disposed to come to Christ for salvation. The question now is, Why do all such persons come to Christ? There are several plain and obvious reasons why they do this.

1. Because they see their *need* of Christ. God teaches them their guilt and danger. He makes them see that they are not only exposed to eternal destruction, but justly deserve it. And this leads them to cry, " God be merciful to us sinners." But by being taught their own characters, and the character of God, they are fully convinced that no mercy can be found, out of Christ. God cannot be merciful to them in any other way than that he has devised and revealed in the gospel, through the atonement of Christ. Those who are not taught of God, refuse to come to Christ, because they see no need of coming to

him for pardoning mercy. They trust in themselves that they are righteous, and that their righteousness is sufficient to entitle them to pardon and acceptance with God. This is the representation which Christ gives of those who have not been taught of God, nor seen the plague of their own hearts, nor realized the sentence of condemnation which God has passed upon them. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Unrenewed and untaught sinners have neither seen God, nor his law, nor their own hearts, nor their perishing condition, in a true light. But those who are taught of God see all these things in a true light, and are fully convinced that salvation is to be found in Christ alone, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved. They feel themselves shut up to the faith. The law, which they have broken, is a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, that they may be justified by faith. They cannot see how it is morally possible that God should be just, and yet justify any but those who come to Christ, and believe in him for salvation.

2. Those who are taught of God come to Christ, because they have become cordially reconciled to God and wish to enjoy his favor. The great obstacle in the way of merely awakened and convinced sinners' coming to Christ, is God himself. They are not willing to come to God penitently and submissively. They have strong objections against his character, his designs, his commands, and his terms of mercy. They are not willing that he should have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and require them to submit to his sovereignty, as an indispensable condition of receiving them into his favor. But those who are savingly taught of God are cordially reconciled to him, and heartily give up all their objections against his perfections, his designs, his commands, and his terms of mercy. All impediments of this kind are entirely removed. They have heard, and learned, and seen so much of the Father, as to love him supremely, and to submit to him unreservedly. They are so sensible of their sinfulness and ill desert in the sight of God, that they feel that he has a just right to save or destroy them for ever. They can adopt the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." They are willing to return to God, whether he be willing to receive them, or not. They are reconciled to him, whether he be reconciled to them, or not. They feel towards God and themselves, as the prodigal son felt towards his father and himself. When he was taught of God, "he said to himself, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have

sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father." He was so fully convinced of his father's rectitude, and of his own ill desert, that he could lay no claim upon his pardoning mercy, and could not ask his father to restore him fully to his favor. So those who have been taught of God are willing to return to him, and ardently desire his forgiving grace, while they renounce all claims to it, and acknowledge that they may be justly denied. Here the similitude fails; for the prodigal had no mediator; but those who are taught of God, and are reconciled to him, have a mediator, and therefore may submissively ask to be completely restored to the forfeited favor of their injured Sovereign, for the sake of Christ who has died for them, though not for their own sake. And being cordially reconciled to God the Father, they are willing to come to Christ, and rely upon his mediation and atonement, as the sole ground of their complete restoration to the divine favor. Besides,

3. Those who are taught of God will come to Christ, because Christ himself appears supremely amiable and precious. They have seen so much of God, and are so sincerely reconciled to him, that they are prepared to view Christ as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Christ's love to his Father, to his law and government, and to perishing sinners, renders him the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely in their view. His divine and human excellences, and his mediatorial offices, all concur to unite them to him, as the branches are united to the vine. The teaching of the Father, by his effectual operations upon their understandings, their consciences and hearts, draws them to Christ, according to his own representation: "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." The Father draws those whom he has taught, in the day of his power, by making them willing to come to Christ. They are drawn, not by constraint, but by the cords of love. Their understandings, their consciences, and their hearts, are opened to see the truth and feel the force of the apostle's declarations in the third of Romans, concerning the necessity and propriety of sinners' coming to Christ for pardon and salvation. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested — even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all

them that believe. — Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins — that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Those who are taught of God, see the truth of what the apostle here says of their just condemnation by the law, of the necessity of Christ's atonement, and of the propriety of their coming to him and believing in his atonement, in order to obtain pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. In this view of God, of Christ, and of themselves, they freely and joyfully come to Christ, being heavy laden with guilt, that they may find rest to their souls in the favor of God.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God teaches men in the manner which has been described, then his special grace is irresistible. It is certainly grace in God, to teach sinners what they are unwilling to know, and what they must know in order to be saved. This is teaching them what men and means cannot teach them, and what God teaches some, and not all. It is, therefore, not only grace, but special grace. And the manner in which God teaches some in distinction from others, shows that his special grace is irresistible. When he teaches by men and means only, which is his common way of teaching all without exception, sinners can and do resist his common grace. The old world resisted his grace, which led him to say, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Isaiah says of the impenitent Israelites in the wilderness, with whom God used the most powerful external means of instruction, "But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit." And Stephen says to unbelieving and impenitent sinners, who had been externally taught by Christ and by himself, "Ye stiff necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Those whom God teaches only by his word and providence, universally resist his common grace. But when he teaches them by operating internally upon their understandings, hearts and consciences, they cannot resist his special grace, which takes away the sole ground and cause of resistance. This special operation slays the enmity of their hearts, and fills them with holy, benevolent affections. It makes them willing, in the day of his power, to be reconciled and submissive to his will, and to the terms of life proposed in the gospel. They are persuaded, not compelled, to come to Christ for salvation. Those who disbelieve and deny the doctrine of special grace

in the conversion of sinners, disbelieve and deny it upon the supposition that it is of the nature of compulsion, and inconsistent with the freedom and choice of the converted. But making men willing, cannot be inconsistent with their freely willing and choosing. The irresistible grace of God is irresistible, only because the subjects of it have no will, no desire, nor inclination to resist it. This irresistible grace, which makes men love and obey God, he continually exercises towards them, from the moment they are converted until they reach the kingdom of glory. Hence says the apostle, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is entirely owing to the special and irresistible grace of God, that some are saved, while others are lost. God does something different for those that are saved, from what he does for those that are lost. He makes some willing to come to Christ for salvation, but not others; and those whom he does not make willing to come to Christ for salvation, remain unwilling, and freely reject the counsel of God to their own destruction.

2. If men are taught of God in the manner that has been described, then repentance towards God is always previous to faith in Christ. None will come to Christ, until they are taught of God to love him and his law, and to condemn and loathe themselves for their disaffection to his character, and disobedience to his commands. Love to God and repentance of sin not only may be, but must be, before any can or will love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and believe in him for salvation. Repentance cannot be before love, nor faith before love and repentance both. If this were not true, there would be no necessity or occasion of their being taught of the Father, in the manner that has been mentioned, in order to their coming to Christ. Our Saviour supposed that none would come to him, before they had been taught and had learned of the Father his character and their own. And it is impossible to see why any should come to Christ before they have learned, by a divine, special influence on their hearts, what God is and what they are. Before they have seen and loved God, and seen and hated their own conduct, they cannot see their need of Christ, nor the necessity of renouncing self dependence, and relying alone upon Christ for pardon and acceptance with God. Though the views and exercises of sinners before their hearts are changed, are often various; some having a greater sense of danger than of guilt, some having a greater sense of guilt than of danger, and some continuing much longer in this state of bondage than others; yet when their hearts are changed, their exercises are uniform in order, though they may not be sensible

of that order. They love God, hate sin, and believe in Christ. This is the real order of their exercises. But some may be more sensible of love to God at first; some may be more sensible of love to Christ at first: and some may be more sensible of self loathing and self condemnation for sin at first. This is easy to be accounted for, because, before their hearts were changed, they had a speculative knowledge of God, a speculative knowledge of sin, and a speculative knowledge of Christ. As soon, therefore, as their hearts are changed, they may instantly love God, and almost instantly hate sin for being against God whom they love, and almost as instantaneously love Christ for condemning sin in the flesh, and making atonement for it. But their minds may dwell more upon one of these objects than another, and, consequently, they may feel more sensibly affected towards one, than towards another, though really affected by each. It is by no means certain that those who most sensibly exercise love to God at first, do not hate sin before they love Christ. It is not certain that those who most sensibly love Christ at first, do not love God and hate sin before they love Christ. And it is not certain that those who most sensibly hate sin at first, do not love God before they hate sin. Converts may be very sensible of the various exercises of their hearts, without being sensible of the order and immediate connection of their exercises. The experience of christians is no evidence that love is not before repentance, and repentance before faith. This point must be determined by the nature of those exercises, and the representations of scripture. The nature of these exercises evidently requires that love should be before repentance, and repentance before faith. If we look into the Old Testament, we shall find repentance always placed before pardon, through the sacrifices which typified Christ, in whom true penitents virtually believed. And if we look into the New Testament, we shall find repentance placed before faith. Christ taught men to repent, and then believe. And Paul taught repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whenever repentance and faith are mentioned together, repentance is mentioned before faith. Though some may consider this as a matter of mere speculation, yet it is of great importance to refute Antinomians; who place faith before love and repentance, and, consequently, make all the Christian graces the fruit of an unholy and unrenewed heart.

3. If God teaches men in the manner that has been described, before they come to Christ, then there is more ground to hope that those will be saved who are under his peculiar teaching, than that those will who are not under it. When God himself begins to operate upon the understandings and con-

sciences of sinners, there is ground to hope that he will continue to operate, until he changes their hearts. It is true that God can teach partially, and leave those to perish in their obstinacy whose eyes are wide open. He often does enlighten the understanding and awaken the conscience, without changing the heart. But when we see sinners awakened and convinced, there is ground to hope that their awakenings and convictions will terminate in conversion; not indeed on account of any goodness in them, but because God has taken them into his own hand, and is able to subdue their enmity, and reconcile them to himself, and so draw them to Christ. Awakened and convinced sinners often imagine that they really seek and strive to come to Christ; but if this were true, there would be no occasion of the Father's drawing them to Christ. They are so far from seeking and striving to come to Christ, that they are seeking and striving to be saved without him. And this is the reason why they cannot come to Christ without being drawn of the Father. This preparatory work of the Father ought to be distinguished from the preparatory work of sinners. God prepares sinners to come to Christ, but they never prepare themselves to come. Our Saviour himself says, they will not come except they be drawn. And no sinners know, before they are drawn, that they ever shall be drawn; for it depends upon the sovereign pleasure of God, whether he will draw them, or leave them to perish for ever.

4. It appears from the manner of God's teaching sinners, that his special teaching does not throw any difficulty in the way of their coming to Christ. His peculiar teaching does not throw any difficulty in the way of their being saved, but directly tends to remove the difficulty which they throw in their own way, that is, their unwillingness to come to Christ. By his teaching, he brings himself and divine things near to them; opens their understandings to see them in all their weight and importance; and awakens their conscience to feel their obligations, and to feel properly towards himself, towards themselves, towards eternity, and towards him who has brought life and immortality to light and freely offers to save them from the wrath to come. By teaching them these things, he points out the way to eternal life, without throwing any thing in the way of their coming. But you are now ready to ask, Is not this special teaching special grace, without which we cannot come to Christ? It is, indeed, special grace, without which you will not come to Christ, but with which you will come. And can that which makes you willing to come, be any difficulty in the way of your coming? Special grace does not give you any new power, but only a new choice. Special grace shows you

that there is no difficulty in the way of your coming to Christ but what you make; and, at the same time, removes the very difficulty you do make. Your refusing to come to Christ makes the only difficulty in the way of your coming; and special grace makes you willing, which removes that difficulty. You choose to misunderstand and misrepresent special grace, in order to make it a ground of excuse for not coming to Christ. How absurd is it for you to say that you cannot realize the being and perfections of God and the invisible things of the invisible world unless God enlightens you, when you are conscious you do not desire to be enlightened? Or to say you cannot realize your obligation to approve of these divine objects, when you are conscious that you do not desire to realize your obligations? Or to say you cannot come to Christ without being drawn, when you are conscious that you are unwilling to come to him, and even unwilling to be made willing?

5. If those, whom God himself effectually teaches by his special grace, will come to Christ, then those whom he does not thus effectually teach, will not come to Christ. All mere external instructions they can and will resist. They will be of no avail to draw them one step towards Christ. All outward means often fail to make sinners read the Bible, which they have in their hands, and which they have time and opportunity to read. They prefer reading any other book, rather than the Bible; or they choose not to read it at all. Outward means often fail of leading sinners to call upon God in secret or private, or of leading them to the house of God, or disposing them to receive any benefit from it, if they do come. All outward means have always failed of drawing sinners to Christ, so long as God withheld the teachings of his special grace. What a variety of external means was used with the sinners in Zion! They had line upon line, and precept upon precept; but instead of bringing forth grapes, they brought forth wild grapes. What a variety of means are now using with sinners every where! But they produce no salutary effect, only when and where God is pleased to instruct them himself. How easy it is for God to destroy sinners! It is only to afford them external teaching, and deny them internal. And he has a perfect right to deny them internal teaching. He is under no obligation to take them into his own hand, to enlighten their understanding, or awaken their conscience, or to soften their hearts. It is only for him to let them alone, and they will certainly destroy themselves. Has not God long let them alone, and have they not long remained untaught, though they have seen the hand of God in his providence, and heard his voice in his word? Has not a spirit of slumber seized their minds, and do they not grope

in darkness at noon day? They know not at what they stumble. Their feet stand on slippery places, and every thing within them and without them, is constantly pushing them on to the gulf of destruction. While God is letting them alone, their situation is growing more and more dangerous every day. And they and others may despair of the efficacy of all external means alone, to awaken, convince, or convert them. These they have resisted, and will continue to resist, unless God, by his special grace, removes their resistance.

6. This subject affords ground of hope, that some who are now in the path to ruin, will be sooner or later taught of God, and drawn to Christ. God is able to awaken the most stupid, to convince the most hardened, and make the most obstinate willing to come to Christ. The Father has promised to do this for all whom he has given to his Son, and his Son places full confidence in the faithfulness of his Father. Hence he says, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me." If there be any here whom God has given to Christ, and whom he has not savingly taught, these he will take into his own hand, and effectually teach them the strait and narrow way to eternal life. He has hitherto delayed to do this, for wise and good reasons; either because he is waiting till they arrive at the brink of destruction, to make a more signal display of his almighty and sovereign grace; or because he is waiting to be inquired of by his friends, to take away the hard, stony, stubborn hearts of his enemies. Those, therefore, who have been taught of God, have great encouragement to cry sincerely and mightily to him, to arise and plead his own cause, and have mercy upon those who are abusing his mercy, and filling up the measure of their sins, and ripening themselves for ruin. You have a right to the promises of God. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God;" that is, all the elect. And it is written in the Psalms, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

SERMON VII.

THE EXCUSE OF SINNERS THEIR CONDEMNATION.

THEN he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed. — MATT. XXV. 24.

IT is easy to understand the general design of the parable which contains these words. By the owner of the servants, Christ means to represent the Creator and owner of the world. By the servants, he means to represent mankind in general. By the different talents, he means to represent the different powers and faculties, and the different privileges and advantages, with which God distinguishes one person from another. By the two servants that faithfully improved their talents, he means to represent good men, who serve God with fidelity. And by the slothful and unfaithful servant, he means to represent the sinner, who entirely neglects the service of God, and blames him, rather than himself, for his negligence. "Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed." This language of the slothful servant, expresses the feelings of every impenitent sinner. From this we may conclude that all sinners are disposed to complain of God for requiring that of them which he has not given them. I shall,

I. Show what God does not require of them which he has not given them.

II. What he does require of them which he has not given them. And,

III. That they have no reason to complain of his requiring that of them which he has not given them.

I. I am to show what God does not require of sinners which he has not given them.

Here it may be safely said that he never requires any talents of them which he has not given them. Christ uses the term talents in the parable in its most strict and proper sense, to signify a piece of money. The Jews reckoned a talent of silver at four hundred and fifty pounds sterling, and a talent of gold at seven thousand two hundred pounds sterling.* But as the parable itself is to be understood figuratively, so the term talents is to be understood figuratively, to signify all intellectual powers and faculties, and all external privileges and opportunities of getting and of doing good. These natural talents God bestows upon sinners in larger or smaller measures as he sees best. He gives greater talents to some than to others, and more talents to some than to others. To one he gives ten talents, to another two, and to another one. To some he gives great powers of mind, and great opportunities of cultivating, enlarging and strengthening their mental powers. And to some he gives great corporeal strength and activity, and peculiar opportunities of exerting these faculties to valuable and important purposes. But he never requires men to have more or better natural talents than he has given them. He never requires the man, to whom he has given but one talent, to have two; nor the man, to whom he has given but two talents, to have ten. He never requires a blind man to see, nor a deaf man to hear, nor a man that has no feet to walk, nor a sick man to be well, nor a weak man to be strong, nor a short man to be tall. He never requires any man to have a better understanding, or a better memory, or any better intellectual faculties, than he has given him. And he never requires any man to do any action which he has not given him knowledge, strength, time and opportunity for doing. In a word, he never requires either saints or sinners to have any natural talents which he has not given them, nor to exercise any natural talents which they do not possess. I now proceed to show,

II. What God does require of sinners which he does not give them. The slothful servant tells his lord that he reaps where he has not sown, and gathers where he has not strewed; by which he means to say that he required that of him which he had not given him. And sinners at this day generally say the same with respect to God. They say that he requires that of them which he has not given them. Though sinners, like the slothful servant, have a bad meaning in saying this, yet their assertion must be allowed to be true; for God does most expressly require that of them which he has not given them. Though he does not require them to have faculties which he has not given them, yet he does require them to have a heart to

* See Cruden's Concordance.

improve in his service the talents he has given them, which he has not given them a heart to do. He requires every sinner to love him with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, though he has not given him such a heart. When he gave the law at Mount Sinai to all the congregation of Israel, he required them to love him supremely, though he knew and implicitly said that he had not generally given them a heart to love him. He now commands all sinners every where under the gospel to repent. He now commands all sinners every where under the gospel cordially to believe and embrace it. And he now commands sinners every where, whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to his glory. Or in fewer words, he commands them to have a heart to improve all the talents he has given them in his service and to his glory, though he has not given them such a heart. He requires them to exercise the same holy love, holy joy, holy hope, holy patience, holy submission and holy obedience, which he requires saints to exercise, though he has never given them such holy exercises of heart. It appears from the whole current of scripture, that God does reap where he has not sown, and gather where he has not strewed; that he does require sinners to have a heart to improve all the talents he has given them, in his service; and that he does require them to have the same holy heart which he has given to others, but has not given to them. I use this phraseology because it is scriptural, and because it is the very phraseology which sinners themselves use upon the subject, and upon which, like the slothful servant, they found their complaint. But though I admit the propriety of their saying that God does require of them that which he has not given them, yet I will endeavor to make it appear that their complaint, even in their own terms, is entirely groundless. Accordingly, I now proceed as proposed,

III. To show that they have no reason to complain of God for his requiring that of them which he has not given them. The idle servant complained of his master, because he required that of him which he had not given him. "Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed." By this language of the idle servant, Christ meant to represent the language and feelings of sinners in respect to God. They all complain that he is hard, severe, and even unjust, in requiring that of them which he has not given them. But that they have no reason at all to complain of God, for his requiring that of them which he has not given them, will clearly appear, if we seriously, candidly and attentively consider the following things.

1. What God has given sinners, is a good reason why he should require what he has not given them. He has given them talents by which they are capable of having what he has not given, and which he requires them to have; that is, a heart to improve them in his service. He has given them all the rational and moral powers which are necessary to constitute them moral agents. And these rational and moral powers, which are natural talents, are the proper and only proper foundation of moral obligation. The bare knowledge of right and wrong, or of moral good and evil, lays sinners under moral obligation to do what is right and avoid what is wrong. The bare knowledge of duty, in all cases, lays men under moral obligation to do it. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The natural talents, which form the natural capacity of sinners, lay them under moral obligation to love and serve their Creator. It is impossible that any creature of God should know his character and perfections, and not be bound to love him; which is precisely the same thing as being bound to have a good heart, which essentially consists in love. The natural talents, or the rational and moral powers, which God has given to sinners, lay them under moral obligation to have what he has not given them; namely, a good heart. They are under the same obligation to have a good heart before they have it, as afterwards. For their obligation to have a good heart is entirely founded in their rational powers, and not in their actually having a good heart. As God has given them the same rational powers that he has given saints, so they are under the same obligations to have a good heart that saints are. Their not having a good heart does not destroy their obligation to have one. Though God does not, and cannot, consistently require sinners to have *talents* which he has not given them, yet he does, and can, consistently require them to have a *heart* which he has not given them. There is an essential difference between natural talents and moral exercises. Though it be not right that God should require sinners to have talents which he has not given them, yet it is perfectly right that he should require them to have a heart which consists in holy exercises, that he has not given them. And every sinner is capable of seeing and feeling that the very talents God has given him, lay him under moral obligation to have a heart to improve them, which he has not given him. And it is upon this very ground that the master of the unfaithful and slothful servant judges and condemns him out of his own mouth, for complaining of his injustice and severity. "And he said unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow; wherefore then gavest

not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?" Or, as it is in a parallel place, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury." This was as much as to say, "You knew that I gave you a talent, and commanded you to occupy and improve it for my profit. You knew that I was very strict with my servants, and would require of them all my due. You ought, therefore, to have had a heart to improve my talent to the best advantage; and had you had a heart to improve it to the best advantage, I should have received mine own with interest; or, as you say, I should have reaped where I had not sown, and received from you more than I gave you; which is perfectly reasonable, because you are, and acknowledge you are, my servant." Now sinners have no more reason to complain that God is unjust and severe in requiring them to have that which he has not given them, than the slothful servant had to complain that his master was unjust and severe in requiring that of him which he had not given him. The reason, in both cases, is perfectly plain and obvious. The master required nothing of his servant but what the talent he gave him enabled and bound him to give him. And God requires nothing of sinners but what the talents he has given them enable and bind them to give him. The talents which God has given to sinners both enable, and bind them to have a good heart; that is, to have an heart to improve all the talents he has given them to his glory. If they presume, therefore, to justify themselves in not having a heart to improve the talents which God has given them, their own mouths condemn them.

2. Sinners have no reason to complain of God for his requiring them to have a good heart which he has not given them, for this is the only thing that he has a right to require of them. They know that he has no right to require them to have any natural talents, or any intellectual and moral powers, which he has not given them. They know that he has no right to require them to have a selfish or wicked heart. They know, therefore, that he has no right to require any thing of them except a holy or benevolent heart. And to deny that he has a right to require this of them, is virtually to deny that he has a right to require any thing of them; and, of consequence, that they ever did, or ever can commit any sin. For if God has no right to require any thing of them, they cannot be guilty of disobeying him, or committing any sin at all. If God has no right to require them to have a good heart, which he has not given them, then he has no right to require them to do any thing which they are not willing to do; which must render them completely innocent. He has

no right to require them to love him with all the heart, unless they choose to love him supremely. He has no right to require them to love their fellow men as themselves, unless they choose to exercise disinterested benevolence towards them. He has no right to require them to repent, to believe, to speak the truth, to do, or to refrain from doing whatever they please. For any precept, or prohibition of his, necessarily implies that he requires such love, such faith, such repentance, or some such affection, as he has not given them; which, they say, is reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed; or, in other words, requiring that of them which he has not given them. Now can there be any thing more unreasonable and absurd than this complaint of God, for requiring a good heart which he has not given them? It implies that God has no right to command them in a single instance, and that they are under no obligation to obey him in a single instance. The complaint of the slothful servant implied that his master had no right to require any obedience or service of him; which was absolutely criminal and extremely displeasing to his master, who said unto him, "Thou wicked and slothful servant: thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed." This you have unreasonably and presumptuously complained of. Therefore his master commands, "Take the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents;— and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Thus God views, and will treat sinners, who complain of his injustice and severity in requiring them to have a good heart which he has not given them, or for requiring them to do any thing which they are unwilling to do.

3. One person has no reason to complain of another, who has authority over him, for requiring him to do what he is able to do but has no heart to do. A child has no reason to complain of a parent for requiring him to do what he is able to do, though he has no heart to do it. A servant has no reason to complain of a master for requiring him to do what he is able to do, though he has no heart to do it. And a subject has no reason to complain of a ruler for requiring him to do what he is able to do, though he has no heart to do it. All human authority supposes a right to require that of men which they are able to do, but have no heart to do. No subject of human authority, therefore, has reason to complain of being required to do any thing which is right in itself, and which he is able to do, if he were willing. The reason why the Israelites in Egypt had a right to complain of their task masters was, because they required more than they were able to perform, though ever so

willing to obey. Now if no subjects of human authority have any reason to complain of being required to do what they are able to do, but have no heart to do, then surely no subjects of divine authority have any reason to complain of being required to do what they are able to do, but have no heart to do. They are as much the subjects of God as they are the subjects of their rulers. They are as much the servants of God as they are the servants of their masters. And they are as much the children of God as they are the children of their parents. It is upon the ground of his supreme right to command, that God requires a cordial and universal obedience of sinners, as well as of others. "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if, then, I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." If a subject has no reason to complain of his prince, nor a servant of his master, nor a child of his parents, for requiring him to do what he is able to do, but has no heart to do; then a sinner has no reason to complain of his Creator and supreme Sovereign, for requiring him to do what he is able to do, but has no heart to do. God does not require sinners to make brick without straw, nor to do any thing which he has not given them talents or natural abilities to do. They have no reason to complain of his requiring them to love and serve him, though he has not given them a dutiful, obedient and benevolent heart. Farthermore,

4. Sinners have no reason to complain of God that he condemns them for not doing what they are able to do, but have no heart to do; for they condemn themselves for the same thing. The idle sinner, when he finds himself plunged into poverty and distress, condemns himself for neglecting to do what he had health and strength to do, but had no heart to do. The spendthrift condemns himself for neglecting to save his property, though he had no heart to preserve it; when he feels the evil effects of his foolish prodigality. The disobedient sinner condemns himself for his disobedience, when he sees the fatal consequence of his disobedience; though God gave him no heart to obey. Saul condemned himself before Samuel, for not obeying the voice of the Lord in the destruction of the Amalekites, which he had power, but no heart to do. Joseph's brethren, in distress, condemned themselves for their guilty conduct towards him, though they had no heart in the time of it, to speak or act peaceably towards him. Pharaoh, in extremity, condemned himself before Moses, for disobeying the divine messages; though God had not softened, but hardened his heart. Judas judged, condemned, and punished himself for not loving and obeying his master, though he had no heart to love and

obey him. Those who were awakened under Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost, condemned themselves for their treatment of Christ, which they would not have been guilty of, if God had given them a heart to know and love the Lord of glory. And all awakened and convinced sinners always condemn themselves for not doing what they are able, but have no heart to do. Such abundant evidence we have, that sinners condemn themselves for not doing what they are able to do, but have no heart to do. They are, therefore, extremely absurd and criminal, in complaining of God for condemning them for not loving and obeying him, which they are able to do, but have no heart to do. If sinners will now only consider candidly and attentively what God has given them, and does not require, and what he has not given them, but does require, they cannot fail of feeling convinced that they have no ground to complain of any precept, or prohibition, which he has enjoined upon them in the Bible; and that it is owing to the blinding nature of their moral depravity, that they have been, and still are, plunged in darkness upon this most plain and important subject.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said upon this subject, that sinners are not under a natural, but only a moral inability to do all that God requires them to do. God does not require them to get any more, or better talents, than he has given them. This they are under a natural inability to do. They cannot add one cubit to their stature, nor one intellectual faculty to their minds. All that God requires of them is, to improve all the talents or natural faculties he has given them. This they do not want natural ability to do, but only a good heart, or moral ability. The slothful servant was as able to improve the one talent that was given him, as the servant that had two talents was able to improve his two; or as he that had ten talents was able to improve his ten. Sinners are as able to improve all the talents they have, as saints are to improve all the talents they have. Sinners in general have as good natural talents as saints in general, and they are under no greater natural inability to love God, embrace the gospel, and obey all its precepts, than saints are. But they are under a total moral inability to do these things. Hence our Saviour says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." Sinners have natural ability to do their duty, because they have natural talents; but they have not moral ability to do their duty, because they have no heart to improve their natural talents. The distinction between natural ability and moral ina-

bility is as plain and obvious, as the distinction between natural talents and a heart to improve them. This distinction is to be seen and felt all over the world. We every where see men of fine natural talents, who have no heart to improve them. And we all feel, at times at least, that we have talents that we have no heart to improve. But notwithstanding this plain and sensible fact, how many are there among the learned and unlearned, among saints and sinners, who either directly or indirectly deny the distinction between natural and moral inability; and maintain that sinners are under a natural, and not merely a moral inability to embrace the gospel, or to do any thing in a right and acceptable manner. This must be owing to their not making a distinction between a talent, and a heart to improve it; or in supposing the want of a heart is the want of a talent; which is absurd, because a heart is no talent. A talent is something that God gives, but never requires; a heart is something that God requires, whether he gives it or not. A talent is something passive; but a heart is something active. A talent has no moral qualities; but a heart has moral qualities. A talent is something which never deserves either praise or blame; but a heart always deserves either praise or blame. No talent or rational faculty can change; but a heart may change, and often does. It is extremely strange, therefore, that so many should think that the heart is a talent, and the want of it is the want of a natural talent, or intellectual faculty, which lays sinners under a natural inability to love God, to repent of sin, and to embrace the gospel. No person would ever think that sinners are under a natural inability to love and serve God, if he did not imagine that the want of a good heart is the want of a natural talent, or intellectual faculty, to love and serve God. And whoever thinks that a want of a good heart is the want of a talent or natural faculty, must, to be consistent, think that sinners are as really under a natural inability to do their duty, as a blind man is to see, or a deaf man to hear. But it appears from what has been said of the distinction between talents and the heart, that sinners want no talents, but only a good heart, in order to embrace the gospel; and consequently, their inability is altogether moral, and not natural.

2. It appears from what has been said, that it is of great importance to understand the distinction between talents and a heart to improve them; or between natural and moral inability. It is absolutely necessary to understand this distinction, in order to understand some of the most important truths in the Bible. Without seeing this distinction, who can see the propriety of the first and fundamental law of God's moral kingdom, which commands every person, let his heart be what it will, to love

him with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength? Who can understand the command which requires those who have no repentance, to repent, and those who have no faith, to believe the gospel? Who can understand the precept that requires those who are totally selfish, not to seek their own things, but the things of others; and to do to others, as they would that others should do to them? Who can understand the express command to sinners, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit;" or, Rise from spiritual death to spiritual life? Who can understand the consistency between the doctrine of regeneration and the command to put off the old man and put on the new; or the consistency between the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, and the numerous cautions and warnings against their falling away? Who can understand the consistency between God's secret and revealed will, or the universal invitations given to sinners to embrace the gospel, and the doctrine of personal election to eternal life? Who can understand that divine threatening, "The servant who knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes," or punished according to the light and knowledge he resists? These are all perplexing points to those who do not understand the distinction between natural and moral inability. And no expositor of the Bible that I ever read, who did not understand, or who denied this distinction, could reconcile these apparent difficulties and inconsistences, every where to be found in the scriptures. It is because Arminians, Antinomians, and Universalists, do not understand, or will not acknowledge, the distinction between natural and moral inability, or between talents and a heart to improve them, that they run into their different and dangerous errors. And no one can refute them, without understanding this distinction. It is, indeed, impossible for any person to understand the truth and consistency of many of the most important doctrines and duties of the gospel, without understanding the wide difference between men's having natural abilities, and a heart to improve them.

3. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, why God is so much displeased with sinners for pleading the want of a good heart, as an excuse for not improving the talents he has given them to his glory. They not only justify themselves in that for which they ought to condemn themselves, but, by justifying themselves, they condemn God as the most unjust and cruel being in the universe. They charge him with reaping where he has not sown, of requiring that which he has not given, and of threatening them with eternal destruction for not doing that which he has not given them power to do. This is a higher charge than can be brought against the greatest tyrant

on earth, or even against the great adversary of God and man. But sinners cannot plead the want of a heart to love and obey God, without virtually bringing this charge of injustice and cruelty against him. Every self justifying and sin extenuating plea that they make, is a God-condemning plea. Just so far as they justify themselves, they condemn him. What can be more criminal and displeasing to God than this? He has given them great and distinguishing talents, and made them capable of loving and serving him; but they deny that he has made them capable of loving and serving him, because he has not given them another talent, that is, a good heart; and, upon this ground, they justify themselves and condemn him. But how dare they "provoke the Lord to jealousy? are they stronger than he?" Though sinners do not always see that, just so far as they justify themselves in their slothfulness, impenitency and unbelief, they condemn God, yet he sees it, and highly resents it. The master of the slothful servant clearly saw the nature and implication of his self justifying plea, and would not endure such an impeachment from such an ungrateful and wicked servant, but condemned him to the severest punishment. And can the idle and unfaithful servants of God, who, to justify themselves condemn him, hope to escape with impunity? They are guilty, but God is righteous. They have injured God, but he has not injured them. And he never will forgive them, until they first condemn themselves, as he condemns them, and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and ascribe righteousness to him, in respect to the precept and penalty of his law.

4. We learn from what has been said, on what account sinners grow worse and worse under the strivings of the Spirit. When they are first awakened, they commonly feel condemned for their past stupidity, and negligence, and slothfulness, and resolve to be more earnest and diligent in seeking the Lord. But as the Spirit strives more powerfully, their wicked heart leads them to resist a sense of guilt, which is so painful to them, and to find some excuse for their conduct. And what the Bible says about the moral inability of sinners to love God and embrace the gospel, they zealously lay hold of as a most plausible excuse; and they begin to plead that they cannot do what God commands them to do, because he requires them to have a good heart, which he has not given them. And now the tables are turned. Instead of blaming themselves for their moral impotency, they blame God. Instead of acknowledging that they have been idle servants, they charge God with being a hard master. They cast off blame from themselves, and fix it upon God. And instead of contending with themselves, they contend with him; which is in the highest degree criminal. Their

carnal mind rises directly against God, and condemns him as the most unjust and cruel being in the universe; which is immediately sinning against God himself, with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind, and with all their strength. And can we conceive it possible that they should rise in criminality and guilt so fast in any other way as in this? "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" This is not only the most criminal, but the most dangerous way of sinning. It directly tends, not only to stifle conviction, but to produce despondency. For, so far as sinners can make themselves believe that the want of a good heart is the want of a talent, and a valid excuse, they will pity themselves as in a deplorable condition, and blame God for not giving them a good heart, and threatening to cast them off for ever for the want of it. A great many guilty sinners have thrown themselves into this wretched situation, by justifying themselves, and charging God foolishly. All awakened sinners are in a critical situation; and it is extremely difficult to guard them against the guilt and danger of justifying themselves and condemning God. The best way to guard them against this delusion, is to make them see, if possible, the distinction between natural and moral inability.

5. It appears from what has been said, that no awakened sinners are under genuine convictions, until they are constrained to give up all their excuses for their negligence, impenitency and unbelief. All their excuses are founded upon their false notion of being unable to do what God has required of them, because he has not given them a heart to do it. This excuse they ought to give up, and must give up, when the commandment comes home to their conscience. "For whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God." The sinner, under genuine conviction, has no self justifying and God condemning plea to make. His mouth is stopped, though his heart rebels. Paul owns that he was subject to such genuine convictions. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." And the publican had no excuse to make, when he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The law, which requires a holy heart, allows of no excuse for the want of it. It is extremely dangerous for sinners to take awakenings for convictions, and a mere sense of danger for a sense of guilt. They must renounce all self righteousness and self justification, in order to accept the unpromised mercy of God.

6. It appears from what has been said, that all sinners are equally liable to conviction. The same talents which God has

given them, and required them to improve, he can turn against them, and employ as means of conviction and self condemnation. All their intellectual powers, all their acquired knowledge, all their religious advantages, and all their easy and agreeable circumstances in life, he can turn against them; and make them feel that these things have increased their obligations to improve them, and consequently their guilt in misimproving them. Though all secure sinners employ all their talents to invent plausible excuses, yet God can make them employ all their talents to discover and condemn their past stupidity, negligence and slothfulness. Though the careless and thoughtless imagine that they can successfully plead their cause before God, yet when they come in sober earnest to justify themselves, they will find that God can condemn them out of their own mouths. How many great and learned men has God laid prostrate at his footstool! It is only to take away their groundless excuses, and they fall before him.

7. This subject now calls upon all sinners, without exception, to improve their talents which God has given them. Of these talents they cannot divest themselves. They are a part of their rational and immortal existence. And they bind them to love and serve God with a pure heart. And if they are slothful and bury them, or pervert them, they will sink them, like talents of gold, in endless perdition. How many sinners have wished in vain to be deprived of their noble, rational and immortal talents, or to be completely annihilated, rather than to feel their insupportable, condemning power! You cannot turn to the right or left, with security or impunity. There is only one strait and narrow path before you—to obey God from the heart, or to be condemned, and destroyed for ever. And can you hesitate a moment, as to what is your duty and interest? Are you secure? Awake! Are you alarmed? Condemn yourselves, and justify God, and accept of mercy! Stand no longer idle. You must soon give to God an account of what you have done with your talents. And if you do not make yourselves a heart to use the talents he has given you to his glory, he will say in respect to every one of you, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

SERMON VIII.

GOD MOST FULLY DISPLAYS HIS GLORY ON EARTH.

And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. — Isaiah, vi. 3.

The death of a great and good ruler is often ominous, and forebodes great public calamities. The death of Uzziah, king of Judah, seems to be represented in this light. He had reigned fifty and two years, and had done much to promote the glory of God and the good of his subjects. But they were unthankful for this rich and extensive blessing; and God determined to punish them for their ingratitude under the smiles of his providence. Just before, or just after the king died, he sent his prophet Isaiah to admonish them of the danger to which they were exposed. And to prepare him to deliver this solemn message to his people, he favored him with a clear and lively vision of heaven and of its holy inhabitants. This vision he relates, before he predicts the tokens of the divine displeasure. The representation of what he saw is extremely solemn. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Some have supposed, and perhaps justly, that the heavenly host meant, by thrice saying holy, holy, holy, to pay distinct homage to each of the divine Persons in the sacred Trinity, who are all concerned in the dispensations of providence. But, however this may be, it is certain from the language of these holy beings, that they delightfully contem-

plate the glory of God; and especially in this world, where it is most clearly displayed. Hence there is reason to conclude,

That the angels of heaven have always discovered more of the glory of God in this world, than in any part of the universe. I shall show,

I. That the angels of heaven have always been well acquainted with this world. And,

II. That they have always discovered more of the glory of God here, than any where else.

I. Let us consider that the angels of heaven have always been well acquainted with this world. All we know about these invisible spirits, we derive from divine revelation. The Bible assures us that they are the first, the greatest and the best of created beings. God created them before he created this lower world. He endued them with superior power, wisdom and goodness. He has, from the beginning, preserved them in holiness and happiness, and given them great opportunities of surveying and exploring all parts of his vast dominions. And there is reason to conclude that they have made constant and rapid advances in intellectual and moral excellence, ever since their creation. Though these noble and exalted spirits have always been invisible to mankind except on particular occasions, yet we have abundant evidence from scripture that they have always been acquainted with the objects and events of this world. When God laid the foundation of the earth, they sang together and shouted for joy. And from that day to this, they have been more or less concerned in executing the purposes of God respecting mankind. It has always been their proper business to serve the church of God in this world. We are expressly told that they are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." We are not to suppose, however, that they are all here at the same time; but only that certain numbers come and go according to the divine directions. And this seems to be more than intimated in the vision of Jacob's ladder. "He dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it." This representation naturally leads us to suppose that many, if not all of the angels in heaven, have actually been in this world, at different times and on different occasions; and that there is no time when they are all absent from this place of their destination. It is natural to conjecture that many of them continually reside here, while others are alternately employed on great and extraordinary occasions. We find several instances of this mentioned in the scripture. There were innumerable angels present when God gave the law at Mount Sinai. To this great occasion the Psalmist refers, when he

says, " The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." The great and interesting event of the birth of Christ called together a vast collection of the heavenly hosts. The Evangelist tells us that when Christ was born, " There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." We read that an angel destroyed more than one hundred and fourscore thousand men in one night, in the camp of the Assyrians. We read that an angel appeared with a drawn sword over Jerusalem to destroy it. Christ told those who came to apprehend him, that he could command more than twelve legions of angels to rescue him. God sent an angel to strengthen him in the garden, and he sent another to roll away the stone from his sepulchre at his resurrection. An angel also was sent to awake Peter in prison, and release him from his confinement. But it is needless to multiply instances of this kind. It clearly appears from scripture, that the angels of heaven have always been conversant in this world; and of course they have always had peculiar opportunities of being thoroughly acquainted with the conduct of God towards mankind, and with their conduct towards God and towards one another. They have been acquainted not only with individuals, but with all the nations and kingdoms of the earth, from the creation of the world to the present day. They have traced the connections between causes and effects, and between events and events, and they know a vast many links in the chain of divine providence. They know ten thousand times more about this world than any, or all the men who have lived in it. These messengers of divine love, and of divine vengeance, have maintained a constant communication between heaven and earth; and felt themselves deeply interested in all the natural and moral good, and in all the natural and moral evil, which have fallen to the lot of mankind in all ages. They have rejoiced and mourned, in the view of the great, complicated and solemn scenes which have taken place in this important part of the intelligent creation. And, therefore,

II. They have discovered more of the glory of God in this world, than in any other part of the universe. It may be pre-

sumed that they have explored the whole circle of creation, which, though widely extended, is certainly limited, and capable of being surveyed by finite beings. They have always been friendly to God, and taken peculiar pleasure in contemplating the displays of his glory. They have always possessed great intellectual powers and capacities, which have enabled them to receive, retain and digest the most extensive, noble and sublime ideas of their Maker and his works. And being spirits, unencumbered by such gross bodies as we have, they have always been capable of passing from world to world, and from one part of the universe to another, with inconceivable ease and rapidity. We know of nothing to prevent their taking the circuit of creation, and examining all the creatures and works of God in every part of the universe. And they themselves seem to suggest this idea of their being thoroughly acquainted with all the works of God, when they devoutly celebrate the displays of his glory in this lower world. They say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;" that is, the Lord of the whole vast number of created beings, in every part of his extensive dominions. They add, "the whole earth is full of his glory." By this, they intimate that, after surveying heaven and hell and the whole empire of God, they discover greater displays of his glory in this world, than in any other. And supposing they have, for ages and ages, traversed the whole universe with a desire and design to discover the glory of the great Creator, there is good reason to believe that they have actually seen and learned more of God in this world, than in any other part of creation. For this has been the great theatre of action to all intelligent beings. Heaven has been a place of rest, and never been disturbed but once, or by one revolution, that is, by the apostacy of Lucifer and his legions. Hell has been a place of suffering, where no new revolution has ever happened. But this world has always been full of changes and revolutions of the most important and interesting nature, brought about by the agency of God, of angels and of men, who have exhibited their characters by the various parts they have performed upon the great stage of action. But whatever has been done in this world may be ultimately ascribed to God, who has employed all his intelligent creatures as instruments to carry into effect his own original purposes and designs. And no doubt the angels have viewed themselves and all other moral agents who have been acting their parts on earth, as mere instruments of fulfilling the eternal counsels of God. So that they have discovered his glory in all the great and small events which have been brought about, either by his hand alone, or by the concurrence of subordinate agents.

But it is time to be a little more particular, and point out

some things that God has been doing in this world, which have given the angels of heaven higher ideas of his glory, than they could discover in any other part of the universe. And,

1. God has established such a connection between one creature and another in this world, as he has not, as we know, any where else established. Angels were all created at once, and stood independently of each other. And while some maintained their integrity and attachment to God, others renounced their allegiance, and rose in rebellion against their supreme Sovereign. But when God made man, he constituted an intimate and important connection between him and all that should proceed from him, to the end of time. And in consequence of this connection, he spread sin and misery through the whole world. This was a greater and more interesting event than any that had taken place in heaven, or hell. For there is reason to believe that the whole number of mankind, from the beginning to the end of the world, will far surpass the whole number of both good and bad angels. This connection between Adam and his posterity, and one man and another, by which their temporal and eternal interests are more or less suspended upon each other's conduct, is a signal display of God's wisdom and sovereignty, and entirely different from his treatment of any other of his intelligent creatures. And while this instance of the divine conduct has filled the whole human race with murmurs and complaints, it has afforded matter of admiration and praise to all the inhabitants of heaven.

2. The method which God has devised and adopted, to save the guilty and perishing children of men from deserved and endless destruction, has given a display of his glory which he has not given in any other part of the universe. Though some of the angels of light became sinners, and exposed themselves to endless ruin, and stood in perishing need of a Saviour, yet God did not provide a Saviour for them, but let them sink in guilt and misery without remedy. It was therefore a signal act of God's sovereign mercy, to provide a Saviour for the fallen race of Adam. And the steps which he took to prepare the way for the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of his love, were astonishing, as well as instructive, to all the heavenly hosts. As he meant to make a peculiar discovery of himself to principalities and powers above, by this gracious and glorious interposition in favor of the sinful children of men; so the angels have been, for ages, delightfully looking into and admiring the great plan of redemption, and have seen more of God in it, than they ever did see, or will see in any other parts of his works.

3. In this world, God has been constantly increasing the number of his moral subjects. There has been no increase of

either good or bad angels; but there has been an immense increase of mankind for nearly six thousand years. God has been every day bringing rational and immortal souls into existence here on earth. The birth of every immortal soul is an event highly interesting to angels, though often disregarded by those who are still more interested. But the perpetual increase of accountable and immortal beings must fill the minds of angels with enlarged and exalted views of Jehovah's kingdom. They know not to what vast extent the numbers of mankind may increase. One nation has been as numerous as the stars of heaven; and before the end of time, the human race may multiply beyond the present computation of men and angels. If the glory of a prince consists in the multitude of his subjects, then the glory of God must be displayed by the vast numbers of rational and immortal beings which he brings into existence in this part of his dominions. Here then angels are constantly learning more and more of God, in this growing part of his empire.

4. God subjects mankind to greater, more numerous and more surprising changes, than he does any other of his intelligent creatures. The angels of light have never been subjected to any great or peculiar changes since their creation; and evil angels have experienced but one great and dreadful change. But all mankind, from their birth to their death, are perpetually subject to great, sudden and unexpected changes. Their bodies, their minds, and all their external circumstances, are perpetually changing. What great changes take place in their bodies from infancy to manhood! And what great changes take place in their minds from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to the meridian of life, from that period to the decline of life, and from that period to old age! How differently did a Newton or a Locke appear in these different stages of life! Similar changes pass over all the children of men, in all the various stages of their existence on earth. They appear like very different beings, according to the laws of their nature, in a very few years. But besides these regular and natural changes in their bodies and minds, they are subject to ten thousand unforeseen and unexpected changes. They are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. Their hopes and expectations are sometimes raised, and sometimes suddenly and entirely blasted. The rich become poor, and the poor become rich. The low are exalted, and the exalted abased. One day they are joyful, and another sorrowful. One day they lead, and another they are led. One day they are in health, and another they are in pain, sickness and distress. One day they are rejoicing with their friends around them, and another they are bereaved and drowned in tears. Such are the changes

constantly passing over individuals; but still greater changes and revolutions are frequently passing over whole nations and kingdoms; so that this whole world is a constant scene of changes and revolutions in the state and circumstances of mankind. And as all these are ordered and brought about by God, so he here gives peculiar displays of his glory, which are not to be seen in any other part of the universe.

5. The angels of God behold him here forming the moral characters of men for eternity. This is the peculiar work of God, who operates in the hearts of all the children of Adam. And the changes which he produces in the hearts of men by the special operations of his Spirit, afford great satisfaction and joy to all the benevolent spirits above. We read that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. The angels of God probably know the very time when any sinner is called out of darkness into marvellous light, and translated out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Christ. And this glorious act of divine sovereignty is no where to be seen but in this world, where God is carrying on his work of special and astonishing grace among his most guilty and ill deserving creatures. Though the angels of God have seen their fellow angels changed from holiness to sin in heaven, yet they have never seen any of their fellow creatures changed from sin to holiness any where but in this world; which is a distinction among equally guilty creatures that eminently displays the awful and glorious sovereignty of God. I may add,

6. The angels of God see him, in this world, continually calling off mankind from the stage of life and from the state of probation into their future and eternal states. Some he calls from temporal life to eternal death; and some he calls from temporal life to eternal life. Here the angels of God see him act a part that they never saw him act in heaven. And this is a most solemn and interesting part, in respect both to themselves, and to their fellow creatures whom they love as themselves. It is undoubtedly a very joyful thing to the guardian angels, to give up those, whom they have attended through life, into the hands of God, and accompany them to heaven. And it must be no less grievous to the angels who have the care of impenitent sinners, to quit their charge, and see them doomed to everlasting darkness and despair. The distinction which they see God make in this world between the vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, must give them the most clear and impressive sense of the sovereignty, of the mercy, of the faithfulness and of the justice of God. Such a distinction they never did see, and never will see him make, in any other parts of the universe. They, therefore, have seen, and will see more

of the glory of God in this, than in any other world. Here God has done, is doing and will do the greatest things, which display his greatest glory before the eyes of angels and men for ever.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If angels discover more of the glory of God in this world than in any other part of the universe, then we may justly suppose that this world is, on the whole, better than it would have been if neither natural nor moral evil had ever entered into it. It is evident that the angels of heaven view it in this light. They were pleased with it when it was first created, and entirely free from sin and misery; but they have been better pleased with it since the introduction of natural and moral evil, having seen the steps God has taken to bring good out of evil. It is better fitted to display the glory of God now, than it was before the fall of man. It is more eligible to belong to the race of Adam since his apostacy, than it was before he apostatized. It is more eligible to live in this world, bad as it is, than to have lived in it while it was perfectly holy. Mankind now enjoy better opportunities and means of getting good, and of doing good, than they would have had if they had remained free from sin and misery. God intended, when he made the world, that it should be just such a world as it is. When he created Adam, he meant that he should sin, and spread sin and misery among all his posterity; and that his Son should suffer and die to save some of them from both sin and misery. God's original design in making this world, has never been defeated by the apostacy of Adam and the sins of his posterity. He sent Christ, not to mend the world, but to carry into effect his perfectly wise and holy and benevolent design of creating and redeeming love. He raised up this world to be a staging, upon which the most important transactions were to be done; and when they are done, he will take it down. The scenes which take place upon earth are vastly greater, more solemn and more instructive, than they could have been if sin and misery had not existed, the Son of God had not died, and sinners had not here been formed into vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath. God has always held a school here, in which he has been training up rational and immortal creatures for their future and eternal destination. God will reap a larger revenue of glory from this, than from any other world; and mankind will reap a larger portion of holiness and happiness than if they had lived in any other part of God's wide dominions. For, by living in this world, they have done more for God, and seen and learned more of God, than they would any

where else. The patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and all who will be redeemed from among men, will always have reason to be thankful that they were the offspring of Adam, and lived in the world where he sinned and fell; where Christ was crucified; where the gospel was preached; where sanctifying grace was given; and where, through much tribulation, they were prepared for, and translated to heaven, where they will be able to sing a song of gratitude which the highest angels in heaven cannot learn. This is the best world angels ever saw; and the best in which mankind can live, if they only improve it as they may, and ought to improve it.

2. If angels discover the brightest displays of the glory of God in this world, then it is certain that he treats all mankind perfectly right, in all his conduct towards them in the dispensations of providence and grace. The guardian angels have always been acquainted with his conduct towards every individual of mankind, and have always been the most impartial, benevolent and competent judges of the divine conduct, towards those who were committed to their care. And if they had seen a single instance of malevolence, injustice, negligence, or want of benevolence, in the dispensations of divine providence and grace towards any of the children of men, they would not unanimously cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Any misconduct in God towards any of the human race, would appear a blemish, and not a beauty, in the view of the holy angels. Though mankind have always been disposed to call God a hard master, an unjust lawgiver, and an unwise governor, yet they have always complained without a cause. But he has always had reason to complain of them for their complaining of him. He has never ordered any thing unwisely, nor required any thing unreasonably, nor afflicted any one unjustly. Though sin has abounded in this world, yet grace has much more abounded. Though God's judgments have often been in the earth, yet has he filled the earth with his goodness. He has been good to all, and his tender mercies have been over all his works. God has treated all men far better than they deserved, even those whose hearts he has most deeply wounded. Why should a *living* man complain? God has never suffered any more sin and misery to abound in this rebellious world, than his own glory and the good of the universe required. And who can complain of his doing that which will display his glory in the eyes of all his holy and dutiful subjects?

3. If angels view this world as the most important and interesting part of the creation, then secure sinners are extremely stupid. They see the same world, the same objects, the same

persons, the same scenes, and the same changes, which angels see and admire; but they take no notice of the heart and hand and glory of God manifested by them, though they are far more deeply concerned in the objects with which they are surrounded, and the scenes through which they are passing. All that they see, and hear, and know, in this world, will make happy or unhappy impressions on their minds, which they can never forget, nor cease to feel. They stupidly think and say, that God hath forsaken the earth, and that he will not do good, neither will he do evil. This is real stupidity, because it is not owing to ignorance, but to inattention. God has made them capable of seeing his glory, which he is constantly displaying before their eyes, in his works, in his providence, and in his gospel. But they choose to pursue lying vanities, and to fix their attention upon trifles, regardless of the most important realities. They practically say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "Their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted." This is the voluntary conduct of stupid sinners, who differ in this respect from those who are awakened. Their eyes are open, and their ears are open, and their fears are alarmed; they see God, and all his creatures, and all his works, armed against them. They believe God is what he is, and what he has declared himself to be, and tremble. God is in all their thoughts, and they meet his sovereignty every where, in his works, in his providence, and in his word. But how many secure and stupid sinners there are, who are going on blindfold and careless in the broad road to destruction, notwithstanding God is constantly speaking to their eyes, their ears, their hearts and consciences! They know not at what they stumble. But they have reason to fear that they will soon fall to rise no more.

4. If the angels of heaven discover the brightest displays of the glory of God in this world, then all real christians have great advantages, while they are passing through the changing scenes of life, to make constant and swift advances in divine knowledge. They see the same displays of the divine glory that angels see, admire and love; and are vastly more interested in the great changes which they not only see but feel, than angels are. God declares that he governs this world in the manner he does, on purpose to make the inhabitants know that he is the Lord. They are all capable of gaining this knowledge, but especially those whom he has called out of darkness into marvellous light. God has shined in the hearts of christians, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in

the face of Jesus Christ. And the apostle says that they with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are actually changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. God has given christians a spiritual discerning of spiritual things; and he expects that they should grow in divine knowledge, until they arrive at the stature of perfect men. Christians are under the best circumstances, and under the highest obligations, to grow in the knowledge of God and divine things. Every thing in the world displays the glory of God, and affords matter of instruction to all who desire and endeavor to gain instruction. You will allow that Moses and Aaron had great opportunities to gain the knowledge of the glory of God, in Egypt and in the wilderness, where God did such great and glorious things. You will allow that the disciples of Christ, who followed him from place to place, heard him preach, saw his miracles, and conversed with him from day to day, had peculiar advantages to gain high attainments in divine knowledge. But christians have since enjoyed better opportunities, than Moses and Aaron and even the apostles enjoyed, to grow in divine knowledge. They lived under a dark dispensation; but christians since, have lived under a more enlightening dispensation, and enjoyed the full blaze of gospel light. Angels have seen more of the divine glory under the gospel dispensation, than they ever saw before. God has done great and marvellous things, in preserving and protecting and enlarging the Christian church, which has been thinly scattered among all nations, who have always been hostile to it and endeavored to destroy it. And he is still doing great and astonishing things in favor of the kingdom of Christ. We have lived in the most eventful period, in these fifty years past. Christians who have lived and still live in this eventful period, have enjoyed and do still enjoy peculiar privileges and opportunities for growing in grace and in the knowledge of God. This world is becoming more and more interesting and instructive to the angels of light, and ought to become more and more instructive to the children of light in the present day; and it must be owing to their spiritual blindness, if they do not grow in the knowledge of the glory of God faster than any other christians have done before them. The ignorance of christians at this day is utterly inexcusable. They ought to discern the signs of the times, and see and admire those things which angels here see and admire. The world are awake to good and to evil, and they are zealously engaged in building up, and in pulling down, the kingdom of Christ. Greater revolutions than we have yet seen are to be expected; and all these will be brought about by the hand of God, and will display his glory before the eyes of angels and men. And

those who have eyes to see, ought to see; and those who have ears to hear, ought to hear; and those who have wise and understanding hearts, ought to learn. The duty of christians to regard the operations of God in the dispensations of providence and grace, is becoming more and more serious, imperious and important. The world is blind, but they have been enlightened; and God requires and expects that they should see, and be able to guide and lead the blind, who are destroying themselves. Let christians be entreated to improve the opportunities they enjoy, to get and to do good in this world, where there is more good to be done, and to be gotten and enjoyed, than in any other part of the universe.

5. If angels see and admire the glory of God in his conduct towards mankind in this world, then there can be no doubt but they will see and admire the glory of God in his conduct towards them, in their future and eternal state. They know what he has done for them here. They know that he has given his Son to suffer and die for them, that he has put the gospel into their hands, that he has appointed men to use the means of grace with them, that he here waits to be gracious to them, and that he sends his Spirit to strive with them; and, in a word, they know all that he does to form their characters and prepare them for their final destination. And when they see God fix them in their future and final condition, they will see and admire the glory of his conduct towards them, whether he fixes them in the world of light, or in the regions of darkness. While they praise God for his grace towards the vessels of mercy, they will also praise him for his justice towards the vessels of wrath. It will greatly augment the blessedness of the righteous to have the angels unite in praising God for their salvation, and no less augment the misery of the wicked to have the angels praise God for giving them a just recompense of reward. The knowledge of the glory of God which angels obtain in this world, enables them to make much greater progress in the knowledge of the glory of God in every other part of the universe, not only at present, but for ever. And while they are now teaching themselves in the knowledge of the glory of God here, they are preparing to teach the children of God, when they shall arrive in the kingdom of their Father. They will know a vast deal more of God's conduct towards the saints, than they knew about it while here, and when they first arrive in heaven. Christians are constantly surrounded by a cloud of angelic witnesses; and therefore it becomes them to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset them, and to run with patience the race set before them, until they join the general assembly, and the church of the first born in heaven.

6. If God gives brighter displays of his glory here than any where else, then all men, in this life, are in the most important stage of their existence. They here enjoy privileges and advantages which they will never enjoy again, after they go off from the stage of life. They here enjoy the best opportunities for securing the everlasting favor of God, in this day of grace and space for repentance. They here enjoy the best opportunities for seeing the brightest displays of the glory of God, and, at the same time, for promoting it, in building up his kingdom, and increasing the number of his cordial subjects. These are infinitely important privileges, which will cease, as soon as we cease to live and act upon the present stage of life. Saints and sinners are here in a situation to do more good, or to do more hurt, than they can ever do in any future period of their existence. Their lives are infinitely interesting to themselves and to others. It highly concerns all to improve the residue of their days to the best advantage for themselves and others. They can never retrieve the loss of time, nor the loss of opportunities of doing and of getting good. They have much to gain and much to lose. This ought deeply to impress the minds of the old and of the young, of parents and children, and of speakers and hearers. It is summer now, but the winter of death will soon come. And now be pleased to ask yourselves, whether you have laid a good foundation for peace and comfort in the closing scenes of life? Have you so faithfully served God and your generation, as that you are prepared, as David was, to fall asleep in death? Have you seen, admired, and enjoyed the displays of the glory of God which he has made before your eyes; and become prepared to see, admire, and enjoy the future and eternal displays of his glory? Have you enjoyed angelic happiness here, and so prepared to enjoy it hereafter? Is your path like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day? Do you rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; or does an expectation of seeing more of it, fill you with darkness, dread and despair? Only put these questions to yourselves, and give an impartial answer to them, and you will determine an important point, which perhaps some of you have desired to have determined; that is, whether you are saints or sinners, or whether you love darkness rather than light; and whether you are prepared for the world of light, or the world of darkness. If you now love the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, this light will arise and shine before your eyes with increasing brightness and beauty for ever and ever. But if you hate the light of his glory, you will soon fall into the blackness of darkness, and the endless torment and despair of hell.

SERMON IX.

GOD'S HATRED OF SINNERS.

Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. — Psalm, v. 5.

David was conscious that he loved God; which consciousness gave him confidence to believe that God loved him with complacence, in distinction from those who were the objects of his displeasure. This filial spirit prepared him to call upon God, with full assurance that he would hear the voice of his supplications. He addressed him in this free and familiar language: "Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee and will look up. For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Here is a plain declaration, that God hates the persons of impenitent sinners. And to set this subject in a proper light, I shall show,

I. That God does hate the persons of impenitent sinners.

II. Why he hates their persons; and,

III. That this is consistent with his love of benevolence towards them.

I. I am to show that God does hate the persons of impenitent sinners.

It is often said that God hates sin, but not sinners. The point now before us to be proved is, that God hates sinners themselves, as vile and odious creatures. It is universally allowed that God loves the righteous, the godly, and all that love him, with the love of complacence; and it is equally true

that he hates those who hate him. He hates the persons of sinners, as really as he loves the persons of saints. This appears not only from the character of God, but from the declarations of his word. It is asserted in the text that God hates all the workers of iniquity. God says concerning his sinful people, by the mouth of Jeremiah, "Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth against me: therefore have I hated it." Again he says by the prophet Hosea, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them." David says, "God is angry with the wicked every day." Moses says of Israel, that they forgot God, and provoked him to jealousy, "and when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them." The Old Testament abounds with passages too numerous to be cited, in which God expresses his displeasure, his wrath and his indignation towards sinners. John says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him." Paul says to the sinner, whom the goodness of God does not lead to repentance, "Thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." It appears from these passages of scripture, that God feels hatred, anger, wrath and indignation towards the souls of sinners, which comprise all their intellectual and moral powers that constitute them proper persons, or moral agents.

II. I am to show why God hates the persons of sinners. Many are fond of making a distinction between sin and a sinner; and while they allow that God hates sin, they deny that he hates the sinner himself. They consider sin in the abstract, and God as hating it in the abstract. But though they can speak of sin in the abstract, yet they cannot conceive of it in the abstract. Who can conceive of sin without a sinner? or of sin that no person ever committed? Every sin is a transgression of the law, and renders the transgressor both criminal and hateful. The transgression cannot be separated from the transgressor, any more than his reason, or conscience, or any other property or quality of his mind can be separated from him. The nature and criminality of sin consists in the free, voluntary intention, or design of the sinner, which is an essential part of his moral existence, and corrupts and contaminates the whole. The apostle represents sin as corrupting all the powers and faculties of sinners. He says, "unto the pure all

things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." And this moral corruption of sinners he represents as rendering them vile and hateful, even in their own sight. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Every thing that is morally evil and odious in sinners lies in their hearts, which are as essential parts of themselves, as their natural powers and faculties, or, as the apostle says, their mind and conscience. And their evil hearts render their persons morally evil and hateful in the sight of God. He hates their persons, on account of their sinful and hateful hearts; just as he loves the persons of saints, on account of their holy hearts. God hates those who hate him, just as he loves those that love him. The holiness of saints renders their persons holy and lovely in his holy eyes. Hence he calls them his children, his friends, his heritage, his portion, his treasure, his jewels, to express his peculiar love and affection towards them. The prophet Zephaniah says to Zion, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." Christ said to his beloved disciples, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." It is holiness of heart that makes God lovely, and spreads a moral beauty over all his natural perfections. And it is holiness of heart that makes saints lovely, and spreads a moral beauty over all their natural powers and qualities. The reverse is equally true of sinners. It is the depravity of heart in sinners that makes them morally corrupt and unlovely, and spreads a moral and odious blemish over their whole personal characters. In them, while they are in the flesh, there dwelleth no good thing, or moral excellence, but their mind and conscience, their whole souls, are morally vile and hateful; and God cannot look upon them with the least complacence, but with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. David says to God, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." I now proceed to show,

III. How God's hating the persons of sinners is consistent with his loving them. This is a difficulty which seems not very easy to solve; and very few, if any, have ever attempted to solve it. Various attempts, however, have been made to evade the difficulty. Some have attempted to evade it by supposing that all the scripture says about the displeasure, the hatred, the wrath and anger of God, is to be understood figu-

ratively; and that no such exercises or emotions of heart, can exist in the mind of an absolutely perfect and immutable being. This mode of evasion has been adopted by some very learned and excellent divines. But it does not appear to be any more inconsistent with the immutability and absolute perfection of God to hate, than to love, to be displeased, than to be pleased, or to be angry with sinners, than to be delighted with saints, and rejoice over them with joy. We know that God is a moral agent, and must have a heart, as well as a rational understanding, and moral discernment. And such a being must be capable of loving what is lovely, and of hating what is hateful. To suppose, therefore, that God does not really hate sinners, is evading rather than solving the difficulty. But others take a different way of solving the difficulty. They allow that God hates sin, but not the persons of sinners. They confidently affirm that God loves sinners themselves, while he only hates their sins. But perhaps it has been sufficiently proved that God does really hate sinners themselves. And if he does, how is it consistent with his loving them at the same time that he hates them? This has been confidently asserted to be a gross absurdity. If God could hate sin without hating the sinner, there would be no difficulty in seeing how God could love sinners themselves at the same time that he hated their sins. But this it has been observed is impossible. It is abundantly evident from scripture, that God does really and literally love and hate sinners at the same time. Our Saviour said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Paul said to the Romans, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And he said to the Ephesians, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins—and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." The apostle John also said to christians, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Thus God displayed his great and astonishing love to sinners, in sending his Son into the world to suffer and die, to make an atonement for their sin and rebellion against him.

It is certainly true, and must be universally allowed, that God does love sinners while they are totally depraved, and dead in trespasses and sins. But what kind of love does God exercise towards sinners? Does he exercise the love of complacence towards them? By no means; for he hates all the workers of iniquity. They are not proper objects of approba-

tion, or complacence, but of disapprobation and hatred. It is, therefore, only the love of benevolence, that God exercises towards totally depraved sinners. He loves all his creatures, whether rational or irrational, whether holy or sinful, with the love of benevolence; that is, he really desires that all may be happy, rather than miserable, simply considered. He views sinners as capable of everlasting happiness, or of everlasting misery; and he desires their everlasting happiness, simply considered, rather than their everlasting misery, simply considered. So he expressly declares under the solemnity of an oath, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that he turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Here God expresses his love of benevolence to sinners, but not his love of complacence, unless they turn from their evil ways and become penitent and holy. It was true, at the moment that God made this declaration to sinners, that he both loved and hated them. And this was perfectly consistent. For if he loved them with the love of benevolence, he could not love them with the love of complacence. Benevolence hates selfish and sinful creatures, as much as it loves holy and virtuous creatures. The perfect benevolence of God produces both love and hatred. It produces love to holy creatures, and hatred to unholy, or sinful creatures. The more holy God is, the more he loves holiness in men; and the more holy he is, the more he hates unholiness, or sinfulness in men. Holiness in the Deity produces love to the holy, and hatred to the unholy. And holiness in men produces the same directly contrary effects. Holy men love holy men, and hate unholy ones. David loved saints as the excellent of the earth, in whom was all his delight, but prayed that God would not gather his soul with the wicked, whom, he says to God, he hated. "Do not I hate them O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those, that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies." But with all this hatred to the wicked, he says he loved them with the love of benevolence, and sincerely prayed for them when in trouble and distress, as though they were his friends and brethren.

There are two things in sinners, which render them objects of both love and hatred. Their capacity to enjoy happiness and suffer misery renders them proper objects of benevolence, and their sinful character renders them proper objects of displeasure, disapprobation and hatred. God views them in both these lights; and his perfect benevolence disposes him to love and hate them at the same time. His love towards them is benevolent love; and his hatred towards them is benevolent hatred. If God's hatred of sinners arose from selfishness, it

would be totally inconsistent with his having any benevolent love towards them. The hatred of sinners towards one another arises from selfishness; and, consequently, is inconsistent with their having true benevolence to each other. But God has no selfishness, and never loves or hates from selfish motives. He is as benevolent in hating, as in loving sinners. The same pure, perfect, disinterested benevolence in God, necessarily disposes him to exercise complacency towards saints, and displeasure, displacency and hatred towards sinners. The distinction between God's love of benevolence, and love of complacence, is no arbitrary distinction, but founded in the nature of things. It is morally impossible that God should exercise true benevolence towards saints, and not exercise complacence towards them at the same time. And it is no less impossible that God should exercise true benevolence towards sinners, and not exercise displeasure, displacency and hatred towards them at the same time. It is not only consistent that God should exercise benevolence towards sinners, and at the same time exercise displeasure, displacency and hatred towards them, but it is absolutely necessary that he should both love and hate them at the same time. And whoever makes and understands the essential distinction between the love of benevolence and the love of complacence in the Deity, cannot help seeing that God must exercise the love of benevolence towards sinners, while he exercises perfect displeasure, displacency and hatred towards their depraved and selfish characters. And, of course, he must see that all the declarations of God's love towards them, in sending his Son to redeem and save them, are consistent with all his declarations of hatred, anger and wrath towards them, for all their selfishness, impenitence, unbelief and disobedience. God's benevolence towards sinners affords no argument to prove that he loves them with the love of complacence, but a conclusive argument to prove that he hates them. Who can imagine that a virtuous and religious parent, who loves all his children with the love of true benevolence, should love them all with equal love of complacence, when some are dutiful and obedient, but others are undutiful and disobedient? And who can suppose that the kind Parent of the universe, who loves all his creatures with pure and impartial benevolence, should love them all with equal complacence, while some love him and others hate him; while some obey him and others disobey him; while some are perfectly holy and others perfectly unholy and rebellious? The distinction between the love of benevolence and the love of complacence is agreeable to common sense; and every person of common sense is capable of seeing it, and does see it, in respect to mankind. A child seven years old can see the benevolence of his parent towards him, while he ex-

presses his displeasure, his anger, and his disposition to punish him for his wicked conduct. But still many men of more than common sense and common learning, either cannot, or will not see this distinction; and endeavor to prove God's love of complacence towards sinners from his love of benevolence towards them, in sending his Son to die for them, and in loading them with the blessings of providence, and in giving them the offers of mercy.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God's hatred of impenitent sinners is consistent with his love of benevolence towards them, then it is consistent with his benevolence to hate them as long as they continue impenitent. If they continue impenitent as long as they live, then it is consistent with his benevolence to hate them as long as they live. If they continue impenitent in a dying hour, then it is consistent with his benevolence to hate them in a dying hour. If they continue impenitent after death, it is consistent with his benevolence to hate them after death. And if they should continue impenitent to all eternity, it is consistent with his benevolence to hate them to all eternity. His hatred towards them must continue as long as they continue hateful objects; and they certainly continue hateful objects as long as they continue depraved and impenitent. God's benevolence towards them will never produce complacence towards them; but, on the contrary, it must necessarily produce displacency and hatred towards them. Some, indeed, imagine that though sinners remain impenitent in this world, they will become penitent in another world, and then God's hatred and displeasure towards them will cease. This supposition is neither rational, nor scriptural. There is no reason to think that sinners will be more pleased with the character of God, when it is more fully unfolded in another world, than they are with it in this world; but will hate it the more, the more clearly they see it; and their greater hatred to God will have no tendency to lead them to repentance for hating him. And though God has promised to make saints meet for the inheritance of heaven, yet he has made no promise that he will prepare impenitent sinners for the kingdom of glory. But it is expressly said that if they die vile, they shall remain vile; if they die unholy they shall remain unholy. And as long as they remain unholy, they must remain hateful objects in the sight of God, whose perfect benevolence hates and abhors all unholy creatures. And as God's hatred of sinners in this world is consistent with his benevolence towards them in this world, so his hatred of sinners in another world is consistent with his benevolence towards them in another world.

Some excellent divines suppose that God's benevolence

towards impenitent sinners will entirely cease in another world. The question has been seriously stated, why saints should love sinners in this world and not love them after they are finally cast off. And the answer given was, that God loves sinners while in this world, but will not love them after they are cast off in another world; and that saints should feel towards impenitent sinners in another world, as God feels towards them. Though he loves them in this world, yet he has no love to them in another world; even his love of benevolence towards them entirely ceases in eternity; and so the love of saints towards them should and will entirely cease after they leave this state of probation. But why should God's love of benevolence cease to sinners in another world? They will be as proper objects of benevolence there, as they are here. God will have as good reason to exercise benevolence towards them, as he has here. Here he does not exercise benevolence towards them, because he feels any complacence towards them. He hates them here with perfect hatred; as perfect hatred as that which he exercises towards the fallen angels. They are here as vile as the fallen angels, and deserve God's hatred as much as the fallen angels do; and yet he loves them with perfect benevolence. The truth is, God always did, and always will love fallen angels, notwithstanding their guilty rebellion; and he now loves rebellious men, and always will love them, though they always continue in rebellion against him. It is entirely consistent, and absolutely necessary, that God should exercise benevolence towards fallen angels and fallen men, notwithstanding their great criminality and guilt; for his benevolence towards them is the only just cause of his holy hatred of them. If he should cease to exercise holy benevolence towards them, he must necessarily exercise an unholy malevolence towards them, which would be becoming as sinful and odious as they. Though God and all holy beings will for ever hate unholy ones, yet they will never feel malevolence towards them. But the moment they should cease to exercise benevolence towards the spirits in prison, they would begin to exercise malevolence towards them, which would be infinitely criminal. It is demonstrable from God's loving and hating sinners in this world, that he will continue to love and hate them, as long as they are impenitent.

2. If God loves and hates sinners in this world at all, then he loves and hates them more than any other being does in the universe. It appears from what has been said, that God does really both love and hate impenitent sinners. Christ loved and hated impenitent sinners, while he lived upon earth. He loved and hated the impenitent young man, who appeared externally so lovely. He loved and hated Judas. He loved and hated the impenitent Jews. He loved and hated even his murderers,

on the cross. Holy angels love and hate unholy men. Holy men love and hate unholy men. Holy friends love and hate unholy friends. And holy parents love and hate their unholy, impenitent children. But God loves and hates impenitent sinners, more than the man Christ Jesus loved and hated them; more than holy angels love and hate them; more than holy friends love and hate them; more than holy parents love and hate them. His love of benevolence bears proportion to all his great and essential attributes. His love of benevolence to impenitent sinners is infinitely strong and tender. He loves every sinful human soul, more than any other being loves it. And as his hatred of impenitent sinners flows from his infinitely strong and tender benevolence towards them; so his hatred of them is unspeakably greater than the hatred of any other being. And it always appears so to impenitent sinners themselves, when they are awakened to realize his infinite hatred. They had rather that the united hatred of all created beings should be pointed against them, and fall upon them, than that his holy wrath should be pointed against them, and fall upon them. The scripture speaks of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God; but these strong expressions but faintly represent the greatness of that wrath of God which abides upon impenitent sinners every day, notwithstanding all the displays of benevolence towards them in the course of his providence. Indeed, all the indications of his benevolence are equal indications of his wrath and displeasure towards them; because his wrath flows from, and is equal to his infinite benevolence.

3. If impenitent sinners themselves are as much the objects of God's hatred, as of his love, then it is very important that they should be made sensible of it. They are willing to believe that God loves them; and they love to hear of the astonishing love of benevolence towards them, displayed in sending his Son to die for them, and in lavishing upon them the blessings of providence. But they are not so willing to believe that God hates them as much as he loves them; and they are as unwilling to hear this disagreeable truth inculcated upon them. Hence they love to hear ministers preach upon the marvellous love of God towards them; but cannot bear to hear ministers preach upon God's holy and just displeasure, and wrath against them. They can bear to hear that God hates depravity, selfishness, impenitence, unbelief, disobedience and rebellion in the abstract. But it is not true that God hates these sins in the abstract, and as separate from sinners themselves. He hates sinners themselves, who are depraved, who are selfish, who are impenitent, who are unbelieving, who are disobedient, and who are rebellious. Christ did not preach about sin in the abstract, as being an object of God's displeas-

ure; but about sinners themselves being the objects of God's displeasure. He told them that they were of their father the devil, and felt and acted as he did; that they had both seen and hated both him and his Father; and that they were serpents and a generation of vipers, who deserved the damnation of hell. This they disliked, and said that he reproached them. Sinners now dislike to hear that God hates all workers of iniquity, and that his wrath is pointed against them, and constantly abides upon them. I know that it is much more pleasing to sinners to preach the love than the hatred of God towards them; but it is not much more safe. They are ready enough to believe that God loves them, but they are slow of heart to believe that God hates them, as vile and odious creatures, even as vile and odious as those in a state of irrecoverable misery. Paul had zeal and fidelity enough to inculcate this truth upon the heart and conscience of a sinner, with plainness and pungency. He said, "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Paul knew that this was the true character of Elymas the sorcerer, and of himself, before his heart was changed. Nor was this character peculiar to them, but is common to the most amiable impenitent sinners in the world. They are perfectly sinful, and consequently perfectly hateful, in the sight of a heart searching God. This truth ought to be plainly and forcibly inculcated upon the hearts and consciences of sinners, to prepare them to see and feel the necessity of embracing the mercy of God offered to them in the gospel.

4. If it be consistent with the benevolence of God towards sinners to hate them, then it is consistent with his benevolence to express his hatred towards them. The only reason why some suppose it is inconsistent with God's love to sinners to punish them, is because it is inconsistent with his benevolence to hate them. But we have shown that it is consistent with God's love of benevolence, to hate unholy, selfish, malevolent sinners. The consequence is undeniable, that it is consistent with his benevolence to punish those whom he hates, and whom his very benevolence disposes him to hate. Punishment is the expression, and the only proper expression of hatred. The infliction of pain, or natural evil, is no punishment, when it is not designed to express hatred towards the subject of it. The surgeon, in the amputation of a limb, often inflicts great pain upon the patient, but he expresses love and not hatred; and therefore the pain he inflicts is no punishment. But it is the sole design of punishment, to express hatred towards the punished. And if the punished deserve to be hated, they equally deserve to be punished, which is the proper and just ex-

pression of hatred. If God's benevolence disposes God to hate sinners as long as they remain impenitent, then it must equally dispose him to express his hatred towards them, by punishing them as long as they remain impenitent. And his punishing them will have no tendency to diminish or take away his hatred of them. If his hatred of them arose from selfishness, and was of the nature of revenge, it is true, his punishing them might gradually diminish and finally take away his hatred of sinners. Sinners often punish one another in revenge to such a degree, as to soften and turn their own malignant hearts into compassion towards the objects of their hatred. But as God does not hate sinners from selfishness, so he will never punish them in malevolence and revenge, but only from benevolence, which necessarily disposes him to hate them, because they are really hateful. If we can only see that it is consistent with the benevolence of God towards impenitent sinners to hate them, then we can as clearly see that it is consistent with his benevolence to punish them; and to punish them as long as they remain sinners, and the proper objects of God's just displeasure and hatred. We have no evidence from scripture that God's hatred of the fallen angels has abated, or ever will abate. And we have no evidence in scripture that God's hatred of Judas, and of the human spirits in the regions of darkness, has ever abated, or ever will abate. Of course we have no evidence from scripture that the punishment of any impenitent sinners will ever abate, or cease. So long as they remain impenitent, they will remain hateful; and so long as they remain hateful, it is consistent with his benevolence towards them to express his displeasure and his wrath, by punishing them. That benevolence of God towards impenitent sinners which disposes him to hate them, will always dispose him to express his hatred, by giving them a just recompense of reward.

5. If God's hatred of impenitent sinners flows from his benevolence, then his punishing them must flow from his benevolence. He can be, and will be as benevolent in punishing, as in hating sinners. And this will give a peculiar weight and pungency to the punishment of the finally impenitent. They will know that God loves them, while he actually punishes them. A disobedient child cares but little about the punishment which his parent inflicts upon him in revenge; but he is obliged to stoop, when his parent corrects in love. The finally miserable will be as capable of seeing the benevolence of God towards them in another world, as they were capable of seeing it in this world, while God was pouring down upon them the blessings of his providence in a rich and astonishing profusion. And this incontestable evidence of his benevolence

will never be erased from their minds. So Christ says in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. When the rich man begged to have Lazarus sent to alleviate his torments, the request was denied on the ground of God's benevolence to him. "Son, remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." The benevolence of God carried conviction to his conscience that he did not punish him from malevolence, but from that goodness which disposed him both to hate and punish him. All the finally miserable will have the same conviction that God always did, and always will love them with benevolence, while he hates and punishes them for ever. How insupportable must that eternal punishment be, which flows from infinite and eternal benevolence!

6. If it be the benevolence of God that disposes him to hate and punish impenitent sinners for ever, then it is extremely absurd and dangerous for sinners to rely upon his mere benevolence to save them in the eleventh and dying hour. This many appear to do, who are not Universalists in theory, or sentiment. And the reason is, that they view God's benevolence, as implying the love of complacence. They cannot think that God, who has treated them so benevolently all their life time, does really hate them in their last and most distressing moments. But why do they form this idea of God's benevolence? It is because they love darkness rather than light, and error rather than truth. It is because they are totally depraved, and their total depravity blinds their understanding and conscience. But see, ye blind; and hear, ye deaf. That love of God in which you trust, may and will sink you to the lowest hell, if you remain impenitent and unbelieving. The wrath of God now abides upon you, and will abide upon you for ever, except you repent.

This subject now calls upon all to inquire and determine, whether they are saints or sinners. The distinction is great, and will draw after it the most serious and important consequences. If you are saints, God now loves you with both the love of benevolence and the love of complacence, and will for ever love you with both the love of benevolence and complacence. But if you are sinners, God's love of benevolence now disposes him to hate and punish you; and he will continue to hate and punish you to all eternity if you continue impenitent. Are you ready to decide the important question? If you delay to decide it, it will soon be decided for you. Though God can have no pleasure in your death, yet he can take pleasure in rewarding you according to your works. And you will know that, from his perfect and infinite benevolence, God will hate all workers of iniquity for ever and ever.

SERMON X.

THE REWARD OF MOSES.

For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. — Hebrews, xi 26.

The apostle employs the principal part of this chapter, in drawing the beautiful and amiable characters of the pious patriarchs. He represents them as having true love to God, and living in the habitual exercise of faith in future and eternal realities. Though they lived in this evil world yet they lived above it. Though they were deeply concerned in the public and private affairs of this life, yet their eyes and hearts were steadily fixed upon the invisible objects of the invisible world. They exercised that faith, without which it is impossible to please God; and that faith, by which both their persons and services met with the divine approbation. But it appears that these illustrious saints were influenced, in the general course of their conduct, by the promises of God, and had regard to their future and eternal happiness. They beheld the promises afar off, and embraced them; and though they gave up their earthly good, yet they steadily sought a heavenly inheritance. This is more expressly said of Moses, one of the brightest characters in this constellation of worthies. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches, than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Here some may be ready to ask, Was not Moses mercenary and selfish in all his conduct, while he acted with a view to a future reward? To solve this question it is proposed to show,

I. What was implied in the reward to which he had respect.

II. That he was truly disinterested in seeking that reward.

I. Let us consider what was implied in that reward to which Moses had respect.

1. The glory of God was implied in it. He knew that God meant to glorify himself by fulfilling his promise to Abraham, and delivering his seed from the house of bondage, and putting them in possession of the land of Canaan. In bringing about this event, God would necessarily display his power, his sovereignty, his justice, his mercy and his faithfulness. Moses expected that the glory of God would be displayed in the eyes of all the nations of the earth, if he should lead the children of Israel from Egypt to the land of promise, by his instrumentality. Accordingly, he undertook the great and arduous task of conducting the chosen people of God to their promised inheritance, from a supreme regard to the divine glory. He desired to be instrumental of promoting the glory of God, in the view of a stupid, idolatrous and degenerate world. And in doing this he placed his highest happiness, and enjoyed an ample reward. All the while he was bearing the messages of God to Pharaoh, working miracles by divine power and authority, and transmitting the divine laws to Israel, he saw and enjoyed the glory of God; which he esteemed more precious than all the glories and treasures of Egypt. Besides, Moses expected to promote the glory of God through all future generations, by leading his people to the place where he had determined to establish his church and maintain his cause, amidst a frowning and opposing world.

2. The good of his nation was another thing implied in the reward to which Moses had respect. He knew that God chose the seed of Abraham for his peculiar people, whom he designed to set at the head of all the nations of the earth, and distinguish by the most signal temporal and spiritual favors. This was a great and noble object, simply considered. To form three millions of people into a regular and harmonious kingdom, give them the best civil and religious institutions, and prepare them for the enjoyment of the greatest temporal and spiritual blessings, was worthy of the greatest efforts of the Jewish lawgiver. Moses saw this end in all its magnitude and importance, and took a peculiar satisfaction in contemplating the future peace and prosperity of the people of God. It was to gratify this benevolent feeling towards his people, that God permitted him, just before he left the world, to go up to the top of Mount Pisgah and take a fair, full and rapturous view of that paradisaical spot, where the chosen tribes were to fix their residence, and enjoy the peculiar smiles of heaven. As a man,

and especially as a prophet, Moses had very clear and extensive views of the great interests of his nation, which he highly valued, and took peculiar pleasure in promoting. He must, therefore, have had respect to this, as a recompense of reward for his labors and sufferings with the people of God. Besides,

3. He had reason to expect a distinguished mansion in heaven, to which he had a proper respect. His own future and eternal happiness was a truly important and desirable object. All the world would say that Moses stood entitled to a superior seat among the faithful servants of God; and that he himself ought to have desired to be near, as well as like to God, in the kingdom of glory; or to be placed in a situation in which he might behold the brightest displays of the divine perfections. This we know he desired before he died. He said to God, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." Who can say that this was an improper desire and request? But if he might desire and beseech God to show him his glory in this life, why might he not as reasonably desire to be rewarded in heaven, by peculiar manifestations of the same glory? Moses had a right to regard his own future and eternal happiness according to its worth, and to seek to promote it in the way God required him to do it. This was, by leaving Egypt, giving up all his earthly prospects, and performing the duties of his self denying and arduous office. In the discharge of these duties, he had a right to derive courage and consolation in the prospect of that eternal and unfading crown of glory, which God had laid up as a reward for all his faithful servants. I now proceed to show,

II. That Moses was truly disinterested in seeking the reward set before him. This is a point of importance to establish; for if he was mercenary and selfish in having respect to a reward in all his conduct, it will be difficult to show the necessity of ever exercising disinterested love. And there are many who deny the existence of any such thing as truly disinterested benevolence. But if it can be made to appear that Moses was disinterested in acting under the influence of a future and eternal reward, then the doctrine of disinterested love will be confirmed by his conduct, as well as by that of many other good men, whose characters are recorded by the sacred writers for the instruction of mankind in all future ages. There are but two kinds of love, which are morally and essentially different; and these are interested and disinterested love. Interested love is selfish, and leads a man to seek his own interest, because it is his own. Disinterested love is pure benevolence towards God and all his creatures, and leads men to seek the good of all intelligent and unintelligent creatures, accord-

ing to their capacity, weight and importance in the scale of being. These two kinds of love are essentially different from, and opposite to each other, in their nature and tendency. Now it is easy to perceive that every moral agent must always act either selfishly or benevolently in every instance of his conduct. This must have been the case in respect to Moses. His respect to the recompense of the reward must have flowed either from selfishness or benevolence. And, of course, if it can be shown that he was not selfish in his views and feelings, we must conclude that he was disinterested. But if we look into his conduct, we shall find abundant reason to think that he was not selfish and mercenary in the general course of his life. Here, then, I would observe,

1. He does not appear to have been selfish by his conduct. This was such as plainly manifested pure, disinterested love to God and man. The apostle says, that when he was come to years, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." This is a plain and beautiful description of a truly disinterested man. Had he been governed by selfish and mercenary motives, would he not have been fond of being esteemed the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and considered as one of the royal family? Would he not have chosen to avoid being known as related to, and connected with, a poor, despised people in bondage? Would he not have preferred living in a prince's court, to spending his days in a dreary wilderness, with an outcast nation? Is it possible to account for the general course of his conduct, from the time he entered upon the stage of life to his dying day, upon selfish principles? Certainly the whole series of his conduct discovers a pure, benevolent heart. But there are particular instances, in which his disinterested spirit was more illustriously displayed. One was, when he risked his life in defence of the life of one of his own nation. Another was, when God called him to take the direction of his people and lead them to Canaan. He was so far from desiring the office, that he begged to be excused, and entreated God to appoint some other person in his room. There was one other instance of his disinterestedness, still more striking. God proposed destroying his rebellious people for refusing to prosecute their journey through the wilderness, and making of him a great nation. But this flattering proposal, instead of exciting any selfish feelings, moved his compassion for his people, and filled his mouth with arguments in pleading for their forgiveness and preservation. He entreated God to spare them, though he

should blot him out of his book. I might mention his meekness and patience under his burdens and trials, and amidst the unjust murmurs and complaints of the discontented multitude. But enough has been said to show that he manifested, through the course of his long life, a spirit of pure, disinterested love. He had the fairest opportunities to discover true benevolence, and he improved those opportunities to act out his benevolent heart. And this affords a very strong presumptive evidence, that his respect to the recompense of reward flowed from the most pure and proper motives. We can hardly conceive that a selfish principle should so long and so uniformly put on such striking appearances of disinterested love.

2. If Moses had been selfish in having respect to the recompense of reward, his conduct would not have been virtuous and pleasing to God. There is no virtue in selfishness. God never required men to feel and express this spirit; but, in all his precepts and commands, has always required them to feel and express pure, disinterested love. His law, which was given by Moses, and which is called the law of Moses, requires nothing but disinterested love. So Moses explained his own law to the people, just before his death. He said, "Now these are the commandments, the statutes and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it." After this, he explains all these precepts as requiring pure, holy love. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." According to this interpretation, all the precepts of the law are comprised in love. And our Saviour explained the law in the same sense, to one who wished to know its first and great commandment. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." If the law of Moses required nothing but pure, disinterested love, then he did not in the least degree obey his own law, nor do any thing acceptable to God, if he had a selfish mercenary view to the recompense of reward. But we find by his history that he did obey and please God, and receive peculiar tokens of his favor. God hearkened to the voice of his supplications and intercessions from time to time. He spake to him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. In answer to his request, he showed him his glory. When he was opposed and reviled, God pleaded his cause and justified his conduct. "And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among

you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold; Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" And it is recorded of him after his death, that "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Now, if Moses had been selfish in all his conduct, would he have met with such marks of the divine approbation, and been exhibited to all future ages as one of the greatest prophets and friends to God? This is altogether incredible. Hence we are constrained to believe that he had respect to the recompense of reward, from pure, benevolent motives, which were pleasing to God.

3. If Moses had not sought a recompense of reward from pure and holy motives, he would not have been admitted to heaven. Though God might have spoken of him according to his external conduct, and directed his character to be exhibited to future ages as an example worthy of imitation, if he had been inwardly selfish, yet we know he could not have been admitted to heaven with an unholy, selfish heart. But we find that God actually received him into the mansions of the blessed at his death. This we learn from the account of Christ's transfiguration on Mount Tabor. "Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; — And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him." It is apparent from this, that Moses not only had respect to the recompense of reward, but actually obtained it. God not only approved of his character and conduct while living, but amply rewarded him after his death, by admitting him into his immediate presence, and employing him to attend the divine Redeemer on a most solemn and glorious occasion. But who can suppose that God, who looketh on the heart and not on the outward appearance, would thus approve and reward Moses by distinguishing marks of his favor among the spirits of just men made perfect, if he had not been truly virtuous and holy in seeking a future reward? Had Moses been as selfish as the Israelites were at the side of the Red Sea, and when they refused to go to Canaan, would he not have perished with them in the wilderness? His admission into heaven, therefore, puts it beyond a possibility of doubt, that he was habitually governed by supreme love to God, in both his private and public conduct. I must add,

4. That holy love, or true benevolence, would naturally lead

Moses to have respect to such a reward as God set before him. He must desire, in the exercise of pure, disinterested, and universal benevolence, that God should be glorified; that his nation should be happy; and that he himself should be blessed in the everlasting enjoyment of God. These were the things contained in the reward set before him; and these were the things which were set before all other sincere servants of God. And we find that such men have always had respect to such a recompense of reward. God told Abraham that, if he would walk before him and be perfect, he would be his shield and exceeding great reward. And it appears that he and other patriarchs did, in the view of such a reward, walk before God with a perfect heart. For we are told, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." As all these saints were disinterested in having respect to the recompense of reward, so was Moses. Besides, we find in the next chapter, the same account of Christ's conduct, which the apostle exhibits as an example to all his followers. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Christ, we know, always acted from disinterested love. He came not to do his own will, but the will of his Father. And in his most trying situation he said to his Father, "Not my will, but thine be done." Yet we see that, in all his obedience and sufferings, he had respect to the joy set before him, which was his reward. Accordingly he prayed for the bestowment of his reward. "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." If Christ and saints could seek a divine reward in the exercise of pure, disinterested love, why could not Moses have respect to a recompense of reward in the exercise of pure, disinterested love? It is certain that true love to God and man must have produced such a respect. So far as the reward consisted in the glory of God and the good of his people, it is easy to see that nothing but disinterested love could have disposed him to seek it. And so far as it consisted in his

own enjoyment of God, it is not less evident that nothing but disinterested love could dispose him to seek it. No selfish man ever desired the enjoyment of God for its own sake, as a source of real happiness. But those who have disinterested love to God, do desire the enjoyment of him, and esteem it as the best reward of all their labors and sufferings. We may justly conclude, therefore, that Moses was entirely disinterested in having respect to such a reward as God had set before him, because no other than disinterested love would or could lead him to desire, and prepare him to enjoy, such a recompense of reward.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If Moses was really disinterested in having respect to the recompense of reward, then real saints may be as disinterested in seeking their own good, as in seeking the good of others. Many appear to be greatly prejudiced against the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, because they suppose that it implies a total disregard to personal good. They suppose that while a man is seeking the good of others, he must all that time entirely disregard his own good; and they cannot conceive it to be right for any man to disregard his own good, any more than to disregard the good of others. This is undoubtedly true; and therefore the doctrine of disinterested love does not require any person to disregard his own interest or happiness. You will now ask, What is the difference between selfishness and disinterested benevolence? If disinterested benevolence allows and disposes a man to seek his own good, as really as selfishness, wherein lies the great and essential difference between a selfish man and a benevolent man; which is represented of such great importance? The character and conduct of Moses will very plainly illustrate this subject, and clear up this difficulty. Moses had respect to the recompense of reward; that is, he really sought his own future and eternal happiness; and he had a right to seek this great and important object. But this object, great and important as it was, was as light as the dust on the balance, in comparison to other objects which he ought to seek, and did seek; and therefore, though he regarded his own good, yet he was willing to give it up for the sake of promoting the greater good of others. Accordingly, he chose to relinquish the treasures of Egypt, for the sake of promoting the temporal good of his nation; and, from the same disinterested benevolence, he was willing that God should blot his name out of the book of life, if that might be the means of the temporal and eternal salvation of three millions of people. Though Paul regarded his own everlasting good, yet he solemnly declares,

"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Though Aquila and Priscilla regarded their own lives, yet they were willing to lay down their own necks for the sake of preserving the life of Paul. It is the nature and tendency of disinterested benevolence, to dispose those who possess it to give up their own good for the sake of promoting the greater good of others. But their giving up their own good for the sake of promoting the greater good of others, does not imply that, in such cases, they totally disregard their own good. It only implies that they place a just value upon their own good in comparison with the good of others, and give up a less good for a greater. When Moses gave up the treasures of Egypt for the sake of promoting the deliverance of his nation from cruel bondage, it did not imply that he totally disregarded the treasures of Egypt. When he was willing that God should blot his name out of the book of life, for the sake of preserving his nation from temporal and eternal ruin, it did not imply that he disregarded his own eternal happiness, but only that he regarded their eternal good more than his own. And when Aquila and Priscilla offered to lay down their own lives for the sake of preserving Paul's, it did not imply that they disregarded their own lives, but only that they regarded Paul's life more than their own lives. If a man who has a hundred guineas in his purse should give them to the robber, to spare his life, would that imply he did not value his guineas at all? No; it would only imply that he loved his life more than his money. Neither Moses, nor any other good man, ever disregarded his own good in the exercise of disinterested benevolence to others, but only regarded their greater good more than his own inferior good. Where then is the absurdity, in the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, which is so often complained of?

But still you will ask — Wherein does the benevolent man differ so essentially from the selfish man? For the selfish man will give up his hundred guineas to save his life, or any greater good of his own, for a greater good in reversion. But will he give up a less good of his own for a greater good of others? No; he will never do this in a single instance. But the benevolent man will give up a less good of his own for a greater good of others. And the reason is, he places his happiness in the happiness of others. But no selfish man ever placed his happiness in the good of others, but entirely in his own good. He loves himself, but not the glory of God. He loves himself, but no other being in the universe; and were it necessary, and could he do it, he would not only disregard, but destroy the good of the whole universe. Does not such a man essentially

differ from Moses, from Paul, from Aquila and Priscilla, from the martyrs, and from every man who loves his neighbor as himself? I now ask — Is there not a difference between selfishness and disinterested benevolence? Is there not an essential difference between selfishness and disinterested benevolence? Is there not a plain and intelligible difference between selfishness and disinterested benevolence? Is it not important this difference should be known? Can any doctrine or duty of the gospel be clearly understood, without understanding this difference? It is not strange, therefore, that those who misunderstand and deny this doctrine, should misunderstand and deny the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of unconditional submission, the doctrine of instantaneous regeneration, the doctrine of saints' perseverance, the doctrine of eternal punishment, and the doctrine of self denial in all cases. To say this doctrine of disinterested benevolence cannot be understood, or need not be understood, is virtually saying that no doctrine of the gospel can be, or need be understood.

2. If Moses had respect, in the exercise of disinterested benevolence, to a future and eternal reward, then saints may and do regard their own eternal good more than sinners. Sinners desire to be happy, not only while they live, but when they die. And when they are really awakened to see their hearts, and their relation to a future and eternal state, they cannot help feeling the importance of securing eternal happiness beyond the grave. Their self love rises into most sensible and vigorous exercise, and leads them to seek, and strive to obtain the happiness of heaven. But they have no desire to obtain the kingdom of heaven, only for the sake of escaping the kingdom of darkness. But they do not value future and eternal happiness, so much as their present temporal happiness, which they refuse to give up for the sake of obtaining heaven and escaping hell. Indeed, they have no direct desires to obtain heaven, to which they have a strong and unconquerable aversion; but only to escape endless punishment. They do not value themselves so much as not to be willing to be annihilated, in order to escape the misery they fear. But saints, who love God supremely, and the good of the universe, have a just estimate of the value of their souls, which renders them capable of both serving and enjoying God for ever. Their own holy happiness appears unspeakably great, and they would not give it up for any thing but the glory of God, and the greater good of the universe. The primitive christians said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." The more saints love God, and the more they love their fellow men, the more

they value their precious souls, which are capable of making eternal advances in holiness, happiness and usefulness. Disinterested love to themselves makes them value themselves far more than selfish love could make them value themselves. Indeed careless and secure sinners value themselves only on account of their usefulness to themselves; and as soon as they find themselves incapable of promoting their own happiness, they would be willing not only to die, but cease to exist. This is the real wish of every unholy creature, who loves himself supremely. But every real christian, who possesses disinterested love, is willing to be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord, where he may be not only happy, but useful for ever. Moses continued to serve God after his arrival in heaven; and so will all good men be useful after they have done serving God and their generation in this world. Good men, therefore, view themselves vastly more valuable, than sinners view themselves. They do not appear to themselves to be good for any thing in future. And they will be as worthless as tares and chaff, in comparison with the wheat.

3. If those who act from disinterested benevolence deserve to be rewarded, then those who act from selfish and mercenary motives deserve to be punished. Moses, who acted from disinterested motives, had the merit of congruity, though not of condignity. There was a propriety in the nature of things, that he should receive the great and glorious reward to which he had respect. Though God was not under obligation, in point of commutative justice, to reward him for his signal services, yet he was bound, in point of propriety, to recompense him for all his benevolent and self denying conduct. And there is the same propriety in God's rewarding all good men for all their virtuous and disinterested conduct. Accordingly we find a multitude of promises made to those who love and serve God from pure benevolent motives, but as many threatenings of punishment to those who act from selfish and mercenary motives. God looketh on the heart, and not on the outward appearance. He approves of every thing done from benevolent motives, and condemns every thing done from selfish motives. He condemns and approves of the same actions, when done from different motives. He approves of the prayers of the upright, but condemns the prayers of the wicked. He approves of the righteous for coming to his house of worship, but condemns the wicked for treading his courts. He approves of the alms of the righteous, but condemns the alms of the wicked. The dispensation of such rewards and punishments will be perfectly right upon the principle of disinterested benevolence; but upon no other principle. For there is as wide a difference between

selfishness and benevolence, as there will be between the state of the righteous and wicked to all eternity. And when this difference between the motives of the righteous and wicked shall be clearly exhibited at the last day, the sentence of eternal life and eternal death will carry full conviction to all intelligent beings, that the Judge of all the earth has done right. How important is it that all men should realize the infinite difference between benevolence and selfishness, upon which their eternal interests depend! How dangerous is it for sinners to expect to be rewarded for that for which they shall be eternally punished! And how criminal is it in those who undertake to show men the way of salvation, to flatter them in the way of destruction! But sinners love to be flattered, and to flatter themselves, with groundless hopes, which must lead to endless punishment and despair.

4. If Moses acted virtuously and acceptably to God in the view of a future and eternal reward, then it is no just objection against the gospel that it proposes future rewards and punishments to men, to induce them to shun the broad road to destruction, and walk in the strait and narrow way to eternal life. The Earl of Shaftsbury, one of the most celebrated deists in Britain, objects against the divinity of the gospel, because it promises eternal life to the obedient, and threatens eternal death to the disobedient. It cannot be denied that the gospel does promise eternal life and threaten eternal death, as motives to induce men to embrace it. Christ sent forth his ministers to preach the gospel to all the world, clothed with these solemn sanctions: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." These are the most weighty and powerful motives that could be proposed to mankind, in their present guilty and perishing state, to accept the offers of the gospel. And they are as well adapted to excite benevolence, as selfish exercises, in the hearts of all men. Nor can any comply with these motives, only in the exercise of true benevolence. Moses, and the patriarchs, and the prophets, and the primitive christians, complied with the terms of the gospel, from pure, disinterested love to God and man, and to themselves. Christ often and plainly declared, that no man could follow him and become his disciple, without exercising true disinterested love. When the amiable young man in the gospel desired him to point out the way to eternal life, he directed him to renounce selfishness, and exercise and express disinterested benevolence. But he refused to do it, and went away sorrowful. Holiness and happiness are the only things which are good in their own nature; and sin and misery are the only things which are evil in their own nature. If men act at all,

they must act in the view of these motives. But they can act as benevolently as selfishly, in the view of these motives. Though the gospel, therefore, exhibits these motives before the minds of men, yet it does not require them to act selfishly in the view of them, but absolutely commands them to act benevolently in the view of them. There would be weight in Shaftsbury's objection, if the gospel required men to act selfishly in the view of future rewards and punishments. The rewards of the gospel are such, that none but those who possess disinterested benevolence can desire them, or obtain them, or enjoy them. Those who proposed to follow Christ and embrace the gospel upon selfish motives, he immediately condemned and rejected. It is only in the exercise of pure disinterested love, that any can have a due respect to the recompense of reward, and finally obtain it.

5. If Moses, in the exercise of disinterested love, obtained the recompense of reward to which he had respect, then all real saints have great encouragement to persevere in their religious course. They are in the way, in the very way that thousands have walked, and received a crown of glory which fadeth not away. All the promises of the gospel apply to them, and assure them of a future and eternal reward. They have not greater trials, difficulties, and obstacles to surmount, than Moses, and Joshua, and Caleb, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob surmounted. They have no more reason to be discouraged, than all the patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles had. But they endured to the end, and obtained the promised reward to which their eyes and hearts had respect. The reason was, they lived in the exercise of that disinterested love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown. Disinterested love will have the same powerful effect now, that it ever has had. While christians keep themselves in the love of God, it will dispose them cheerfully to give up what God calls them to give up, to endure what God calls them to endure, and to do what God calls them to do. God, in the gospel, has connected duty and happiness together. And christians cannot promote their own happiness more effectually and infallibly, than by seeking the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom; for all his interests are theirs, and they shall enjoy them as far as their capacities and desires will permit.

6. If Moses and other good men were governed by disinterested love in seeking and obtaining a future and eternal reward, then none have any reason to expect to obtain a crown of righteousness, without exercising true disinterested love. You may now call the distinction between selfishness and disinterested benevolence, a mere metaphysical and trifling distinction.

But you will find it is a scriptural distinction, which will determine your eternal destiny. And unless you turn from selfishness to benevolence, you will be rejected at the last day, and be separated from the benevolent, denied their reward, and doomed to suffer the due reward of your selfish and sinful conduct to all eternity.

7. This subject now asks of all, whether they are walking in the strait and narrow way to heaven. Have you that respect to recompense that Moses had? His life, his death, and his present state are recorded. He has arrived at heaven safe. Look at his character and conduct, and compare your own with his. If you find a resemblance, take the comfort of it. But if not, you have reason to fear that you will lose the promise of rest, and never sit down with the blessed in the kingdom of glory.

SERMON XI.

CONSTANT JOY IN GOD THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS.

Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, Rejoice. — Philippians, iv. 4.

The apostles took peculiar care of the churches which they planted, and employed many means to confirm them in their faith, preserve them from error, and promote their peace, consolation and growth in grace. They either visited them personally, or wrote to them frequently, and directed them to read the epistles they severally received, to each other, that they might all derive edification and comfort from them. Paul wrote most of his epistles on some particular occasions, in order to rectify some particular error, or to guard against some particular danger, or to reprove some unchristian practice. But he seems to have written this epistle to enforce a particular duty, which all christians were too apt to neglect; and that is, the duty of rejoicing in God. He had said, in the first verse of the third chapter in this epistle, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." And recollecting what he had said before, he still thought it proper to repeat again and again the same injunction, in the fourth verse of this fourth chapter. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." These repetitions plainly indicate that christians in general are very backward to perform the duty enjoined in the text; and that their duty of rejoicing in the Lord is not only very important, but needs to be repeatedly and forcibly inculcated upon them. Accordingly it is proposed, in this discourse,

I. To consider what is implied in the duty of christians' rejoicing in God always;

II. To consider the propriety of their being required to perform this duty always; and,

III. To consider some peculiar reasons, why they should rejoice in the Lord always.

I. Let us consider what is implied in the duty of christians' rejoicing in the Lord always. And,

1. This implies that they are pleased that God does really exist. All mankind are naturally unwilling that there should be a God. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Every man, in a state of nature, dreads the thought of the divine existence. And though he cannot resist the weighty evidence of an eternal and self existent Being, yet his belief of God, instead of giving him the least pleasure, fills his mind with the same kind of fear and trembling, which apostate spirits feel. All men naturally wish to be independent, and therefore cannot bear the thought that there is a being above them, who can control and dispose of them according to his pleasure. But christians, whose enmity to God has been slain, are willing that he should exist. It is impossible that men should rejoice in a Being whose existence they disbelieve and dislike. If christians, therefore, did not believe and like the existence of God, they could not rejoice in him. So that their rejoicing in God implies that they rejoice that he now exists, and always will exist, without the least variableness, or shadow of turning.

2. The duty enjoined upon christians in the text, implies their rejoicing, not only that God exists, but that he exists possessed of all divine excellences and perfections. God is infinitely superior to any other and all other beings in the universe. His power, his knowledge, his wisdom, and his goodness, are unlimited and incomprehensible. It is the duty of christians to rejoice that God is the first, the greatest, the wisest, and best of all beings, without the possibility of change, or becoming in the least degree mutable in the essential attributes of his nature. They ought to rejoice that he always has been, and always will be without the least imperfection in power, knowledge, wisdom, or goodness. For they could not rejoice in him, if it were possible that he should either intentionally, or unintentionally, make any mistake, or use any deception. But they know that he cannot deceive and cannot err, because he is immutable in his natural and moral attributes; and there is as solid ground to rejoice in them, as to rejoice in his necessary existence. They are pleased, therefore, that he is altogether such a being as he is.

3. Their duty enjoined in the text, requires them to rejoice that he formed the most wise, and just, and benevolent designs from eternity. They would have no reason to rejoice either in

the existence, or perfections of God, if he had not immutably determined to employ all his natural and moral attributes in promoting the greatest, the wisest, and best designs. Had he never determined to act out and display his great and amiable character in the works of creation, providence and redemption, there would have been no ground or reason for rejoicing in him. Strip God of all his wise and holy designs, and we strip him of all his moral excellences; and when he is divested of these, his natural perfections lose all their lustre, and are no longer objects of complacency and delight, but only of fear and dread. To rejoice in God, therefore, implies rejoicing in all his wise and holy purposes, respecting himself and every creature, object and event that ever has existed, or ever will exist. Nor can christians sincerely rejoice in God, unless they are pleased that he is in one mind, that his counsel shall stand, and that it is as impossible for any created being to frustrate, counteract, or defeat his purposes, as to destroy his existence. I may add,

4. To rejoice in God is to rejoice that he is constantly and irresistibly carrying into effect all his original and eternal designs, or that he is working all things after the counsel of his own will. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." If it be desirable that the greatest, the wisest, and best of beings should govern the universe, then it is desirable that he should direct every event, and dispose of every object, just as he originally intended, before the foundation of the world. And christians cannot do their duty to rejoice in God, unless they heartily rejoice in all the dispensations of his providence and grace. In all these respects, christians are required to rejoice in God, and to rejoice in him always. So runs the divine command. "Rejoice in the Lord alway." God's existence is always the same; his perfections are always the same; his designs are always the same; and he always governs all things according to his designs; and therefore we must suppose the command in the text requires christians to rejoice in the Lord, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances whatsoever. Let us now inquire,

II. Whether there be a propriety in the precept which requires christians to rejoice in the Lord always.

There is no question whether God may, with propriety, require men to rejoice in him sometimes; but it may be a question whether there be a propriety in requiring them to rejoice in him always, or at all times. He certainly requires men to mourn sometimes. Solomon says that "there is a time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Men are required to weep with them that weep, as well as to rejoice with them that rejoice. In Joel's day, God

said to his people, "Turn ye even to me with all your heart and with fasting and with weeping, and with mourning: Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." Now, since God expressly requires men to mourn, it must unquestionably be their duty to obey this command. But how is it possible, that we should obey his command to rejoice always, and yet obey his command to mourn sometimes. His command to mourn sometimes seems to forbid our rejoicing always. Where then is the propriety of the precept to rejoice always? Certainly we have no right to call the propriety of this precept in question; and of course we must believe that it is consistent with the precept to mourn; and that its consistency may be known and made to appear. It cannot be denied that there have been, from the beginning of the world to this day, thousands and millions of things under the divine government, which are proper objects of regret, sorrow and mourning. Every natural and moral evil that has ever taken place in any part of God's extensive dominions, is an object of mourning and sorrow. The sin and misery of the fallen angels, the sin and misery of Adam and of all his posterity, and all the pains and groans of the animal creation, are to be regretted and lamented, as disagreeable and undesirable evils, in themselves considered. There is an essential difference between evil objects and good objects, in themselves considered. Good objects are matters of joy; and evil objects are matters of sorrow. Holiness and happiness are good objects; but sin and misery are evil objects. There is always a good reason to rejoice in holiness and happiness; but no good reason ever to rejoice in sin and misery. It is one thing to rejoice in God, and another thing to rejoice in the holiness and happiness which he causes to exist. And it is one thing to rejoice in God, and another to rejoice in his introducing sin and misery into his moral system. There is always reason to rejoice that God is what he is, and does what he does. He rejoices in himself on both these accounts. He says, "I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." Now it is easy to see a good reason to rejoice in what God is, and in what he does. He is good in himself, and he always acts from wise and good motives, whether he forms light or creates darkness, whether he makes peace, or creates evil; that is, whether he produces natural, or moral good, or whether he produces natural or moral evil. Hence there is a propriety in his requiring us to rejoice in himself always; but there is no propriety in his ever requiring us to mourn in himself. Nor do we find a single command to

mourn in the Lord. The ground of mourning is entirely different from the ground of rejoicing, in all cases. There is ground of rejoicing in God and in all the natural and moral good he causes to take place; and there is ground of mourning in all the natural evils his creatures suffer, and in all the moral evils they commit. There is just cause to mourn for creatures, but no just cause to mourn for God. Therefore mourning for creatures is perfectly consistent with always rejoicing in God. Notwithstanding the ten thousand natural and moral evils that abound all over the world, and wring the hearts of multitudes every day with anguish and sorrow, there is always abundant reason to rejoice in God. For God acts as wisely and benevolently in bringing about sin and misery, as in bringing about holiness and happiness. A patient may rejoice in the skill and benevolence of the surgeon, while he mourns and bewails the pains of amputation. Men may rejoice in God's wisdom and goodness in causing all things to take place as they do, and yet lament and mourn on account of a vast many things that do take place. God may therefore with great propriety require us always to rejoice that he is, and that he reigns, while he requires us to mourn for sin and misery in ourselves and others. This being true, I proceed as proposed,

III. To mention some peculiar reasons, why we should rejoice in God always. And,

1. We have reason always to rejoice in God, because he always knows what is best to do with all his creatures. His understanding is infinite, and comprehends all his creatures and all his works at one clear, intuitive view. All creatures and all objects always lie equally open and naked to his all seeing eye, from eternity to eternity. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." He is the only wise God; and he alone knows what is wisest and best to do with all created beings and objects. He is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. Amidst all the natural and moral evils that abound and always will abound in the universe, he sees no doubtful or difficult cases; but always knows what is best to do, and how it is best to treat every rational and irrational creature, and every holy and unholy creature, in the innumerable circumstances in which they are placed. He is the only being, who has this universal and all comprehensive knowledge. Among all created beings, there is not one who knows all things. The highest, noblest and wisest intelligent creatures cannot see all things at once; and much less to all eternity. And of course, they cannot see what is best for themselves, and much less what is best for their fellow creatures, through every period of their existence. It is therefore a matter of great and universal joy, that

God always knows what is best for the whole intelligent universe, who always will be inseparably connected and have a mutual influence upon each other. There is no ground to rejoice in the knowledge or wisdom of any created beings, because their wisdom and knowledge are limited, and they may err, through ignorance or design. But there is a just and solid ground to rejoice in God, who always knows what is best for the whole intelligent universe, though more numerous than the stars of heaven.

2. We have always reason to rejoice in God, because he not only knows what is best to do with all his creatures, but is always immutably disposed to do what is best. He has them all under his eye, and sees all their external circumstances, and knows all their internal views and desires, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. As a father feels towards his children, so the Father of mercies feels towards his whole family, whether in heaven, or earth, or any other part of the universe. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He beholds all his creatures from the highest to the lowest, with an impartial and benevolent eye. As he knows what is best, so he is always disposed to do what is best. This is far from being true in respect to short sighted and sinful creatures. They are not disposed to do what they know to be right, and believe to be best; but employ their rational powers in doing evil, instead of doing good; and would, were it in their power, destroy all the holiness and happiness in the universe. And since there is no ground of rejoicing in the goodness of any created beings, it is matter of high and pure joy that there is one Being, in whose boundless goodness there is a permanent foundation always to rejoice. The perfect goodness of God is, in its own nature, a just and immutable cause of rejoicing, aside from the ten thousand streams of goodness which flow from it. There is, indeed, a good reason to rejoice in the streams of divine goodness; but these are nothing and less than nothing, in comparison with the Fountain of all good. All the good effects of divine goodness are, in themselves considered, just cause of rejoicing; but to rejoice in these properly, we ought to rejoice, principally and supremely, because they flow from God the fountain of all good; who remains the same perfectly good being, whether he directs the streams of his goodness to us, or to any of our fellow creatures; or whether he turns the streams of his goodness from us to other objects of his benevolence or complacency. As God is always disposed to do what is best in regard to his whole intelligent creation, we have always reason to rejoice in him, because he is disposed to do all things that are wisest and best to be done; for we ought always to

desire what is best should be done, and to rejoice when we know that it is done. I must add,

3. We have reason to rejoice in God always, not only because he always knows what is best, and is disposed to do what is best, but because he is absolutely able to do what is best. If his power were not as unlimited as his wisdom and goodness, there would be no just foundation to rejoice in him always. If there were a single case, among all his creatures in any part of the universe, in which he could not do what he saw wisest and best to be done, it would shake all confidence in him, and forbid our ever rejoicing in him. For if his power should fail in one instance, it would be impossible for us to know that it would not fail in ten thousand instances; and in those which would be most injurious, if not destructive, to the holiness and happiness of the whole intelligent creation. If he were not able to govern any, or all of his rebellious creatures, we should have no permanent foundation to rejoice in his government, either in time or eternity. Indeed, we should have no just ground to rejoice always in his wisdom, or in his goodness, if he were not always able to do what he saw to be best. But the scripture assures us that his power is absolutely unlimited and irresistible. Job says, "I know that thou canst do every thing." The power of God is almighty and irresistible. There is none can stay his hand. He has the same controlling and irresistible power over all his creatures, that the potter has over the clay. The Psalmist says, "Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." And he always is able to do whatsoever he pleases. If he knows what is best, and is pleased to do whatever is best, he certainly always will do what is best. God is an infinitely wise and benevolent and powerful being, who has formed the wisest and best designs; and who is infinitely more zealous to employ his almighty power to accomplish them, than any of his creatures are to employ all their powers and faculties to accomplish any of their most important and desirable purposes. That such a being exists, and rules in the armies of heaven above, and among the inhabitants of this lower world, is a matter of just and universal joy to the whole intelligent creation. The apostle had good ground to call upon all christians to rejoice in the Lord always. And David had as good ground to call upon all mankind to rejoice in God. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." This is calling upon mankind to rejoice in God always, notwithstanding the innumerable evils which are a just occasion of lamentation, sorrow and mourning. There

is every thing in God, which always renders him worthy of the trust, the confidence and joy of the whole world, and the whole universe.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said, that to rejoice in God always, is the most difficult duty that christians have to perform. They are required to rejoice in God always, to rejoice evermore. There is no duty more expressly and repeatedly enjoined upon good men, than rejoicing in the Lord, or before the Lord. The pious Israelites were required to rejoice before the Lord, with all their children and households. David calls upon all good men to rejoice in the Lord. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous." "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." It seems to be a very easy duty to rejoice in the Lord sometimes, but not so easy to rejoice in him always. But christians are commanded to rejoice in the Lord always, amidst all the calamities, afflictions, bereavements, sorrows and trials, which fall upon the world in general, and upon themselves in particular. Hence says the apostle Peter to christians scattered all over the world, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." To rejoice in God always, implies something different from rejoicing in his favors, and from rejoicing in his frowns. It implies rejoicing in his goodness, which seeks the highest good of the universe, and not the separate highest good of any individual creature in the universe. Rejoicing in God can flow from nothing but a disinterested love to God, and the good of all intelligent beings; which disposes a person to be willing that God should seek his own glory and the highest holiness and happiness of his holy creatures. God's goodness is disinterested, impartial and universal; and none but those who possess the same kind of goodness can rejoice in his goodness. It is owing to his goodness that he introduced natural and moral evils into his original and eternal purpose of creation; and it is equally owing to his goodness that these evils have abounded and will continue to abound, as long as the world stands, and sinful and miserable creatures exist. And to rejoice in his goodness, is to rejoice that all these evils take place under his universal government. To rejoice in God is to rejoice that he governs all things in the very manner in which he does govern them. The heavenly hosts rejoice that he governs this evil world just as he does. They cry "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord

of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." They see his goodness in all the dark as well as light dispensations of his providence in this world, and rejoice in it. Though they see this world, which is so often and properly called a vale of tears, and observe thousands every day plunged in the most pungent sorrows and anguish, yet they rejoice in God, who inflicts all these evils upon mankind. And it is the duty of christians thus always to rejoice in God, notwithstanding all the scenes of sorrow, affliction and mourning they are called to pass through. But is there a more difficult duty to perform, than rejoicing in God under such circumstances?

2. Christians, who always rejoice in God, perform a duty which is the most pleasing to him. He says, "I love them that love me." Those who rejoice in God at all times, and under all circumstances, exercise the purest and highest love to God. They love him for his goodness, which is the sum and comprehension of all his moral excellences. God is love. He is perfect goodness itself. And it is only because he is supremely good, and exercises supreme and universal goodness in all his conduct, that he deserves to be supremely loved by all his intelligent creatures. Were not his power and knowledge and wisdom and sovereignty under the constant influence of his supreme goodness, there would be nothing in him, or done by him, which would deserve the supreme affection of men or angels. But his goodness, which spreads a moral glory over all his other attributes, renders him infinitely worthy of the supreme affection of all created intelligences. And when they love him for his goodness, they love him for what he is in himself; and when they love him for what he is in himself, and for what he loves himself, their love is highly pleasing to him. Their love is not mean and mercenary, but sincere and supreme. Such was the love of Abraham, when he offered up his son Isaac upon the altar. Such was the love of Moses, when he was willing to suffer affliction with his people, in order to lead them to the land of promise; and when he was willing to have his name blotted out of the book of life, if it might be the means of saving his people from threatened and deserved destruction. And such is the love of sincere christians, who are willing to give up all for the kingdom of God's sake; or when they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and glory in tribulations also. God rejoices over christians when they rejoice in him, amidst all the evils which he inflicts upon them and upon the world for the promotion of his own glory and the holiness and happiness of the universe. Nothing but pure, disinterested, supreme love to God, can dispose christians to rejoice in him always, whether they receive good, or whether

they receive evil at his hands. To rejoice in the Lord always, therefore, is the most acceptable duty that christians can perform, because it is the most difficult duty to perform. It is easier for a man to give all his goods to feed the poor, or his body to be burned, than to rejoice in God in times of public calamities, or personal trials and tribulations. Satan supposed that Job could not perform this difficult duty; but God convinced him that he was able to perform it. And when he did perform it, it was highly acceptable to God, who pronounced him a perfect and upright man. When christians rejoice in God while they are receiving good at his hands, he is pleased with them; but he is much more pleased, if they rejoice in him when they receive evil.

3. It appears from what has been said, that those christians who always rejoice in God, do peculiar honor to religion. They give clear and striking evidence that true religion, or a christian spirit, will cause men to rejoice in God always; which is a peculiar and most desirable effect that nothing else will produce. Mere selfishness will dispose men to rejoice in prosperity, or while they are receiving good at the hand of God. The world in general, who are impenitent, unbelieving, and totally destitute of religion, are very joyful in prosperity; but adversity spoils all their joy, and fills them with nothing but pain, sorrow, and grief. Haman was joyful till his good fortune forsook him. The Israelites were in raptures of joy at the side of the Red Sea, but sunk in despondency when the spies returned. The stony ground hearer receiveth the word with joy, and dureth for a while; but when tribulation or persecution arises, he is by and by offended. Multitudes, who embrace the gospel upon selfish motives, greatly rejoice, and imagine that they shall always rejoice; but as they rejoice in themselves, and not in God, their joy generally soon forsakes them; which brings a reproach upon themselves and upon religion itself. But those who understandingly and cordially embrace the gospel, rejoice in God; and as they see cause to rejoice in God at first, so they see cause to rejoice in God always. They, like the noble Ethiopian, go on their way rejoicing at all times and under all circumstances; and thus they manifest to the world the nature and tendency of true religion to produce pure and permanent joy and rejoicing; which reflects great honor upon Christianity. By always rejoicing in God, Abraham, Moses and Job did great honor to religion. In the same way, the apostles and primitive christians adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour. They say of themselves, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;—as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." When they

were taken, thrown into prison, and threatened with severe punishments for preaching the gospel, by the highest ecclesiastical judicatory; they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. Yea, they took the spoiling of their goods joyfully. They always rejoiced in God; by which they manifested the reality, the beauty and excellence of that religion which caused them to rejoice at all times, and under all circumstances of adversity and affliction. There is nothing which gives the men of the world such a deep and painful conviction of the reality and importance and excellence of religion, as to see christians rejoicing always, under both the smiles and frowns of divine providence, and saying, as the Shunammite did, "All is well." This is something that they do not feel, and cannot say. We are always struck with the beauty, excellence and sincerity of those christians who appear to be happy, and rejoice under such trials and calamities and afflictions, as throw other men into gloom, darkness, and inconsolable sorrow and distress. The reason is, they appear to enjoy the supports of religion, while all other supports are taken away. The joy and rejoicing of the primitive christians made the world ready to say that they were beside themselves; they could not see the source of their joys and consolation. But the men of the world at this day, who doctrinally understand the gospel, are convinced that those who really believe and love it, must rejoice in God under all his dispensations of providence, that are designed to promote his glory, and the highest good of the universe. And when they see christians actually rejoice in adversity as well as in prosperity, in sickness as well as in health, and in the nearest prospects of death, they cannot help believing that religion is, of all things, the most desirable and most important.

4. It appears from what has been said, that christians who obey the precept in the text, and rejoice in God always, are the happiest men in the world. It cannot be denied that the men of the world are in some measure happy, so long as they do rejoice; but their rejoicing is often interrupted, diminished, and even turned into sorrow. Joy in the world is essentially different from joy in God, even while it continues. Their joy is generally mixed with a consciousness of its folly and criminality. Hence says Solomon, "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of fools. This also is vanity." The bursts of joy and laughter in sinners are always attended or followed by a sense of guilt and self reproach. Accordingly, Christ pronounces a wo to such vain and sinful joy. "Wo unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep." Whether the joy of sinners arises from mere trifles and vanities, or from the more valuable, laudable and important worldly

objects, it is altogether vain, sinful, inconsistent, interrupted and short lived. The world and the things of the world are no source of pure and permanent joy. But God is a source of pure, never failing, and satisfactory happiness; and all who always rejoice in him, derive from him constant, pure and lasting happiness. Hence Christ says, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The great and precious promises which God has given to christians, lay a solid foundation for their pure, constant, increasing joy and rejoicing. So the primitive christians thought and said, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." These promises all belong to sincere christians, and they all live by faith in them; and of course rejoice in the Lord always. The sources of other men's rejoicings are continually failing, and will finally all fail. But christians have a source of joy which will not fail, when all other sources of joy will fail. They must be, therefore, far more happy even in this vale of tears, than any other men in the world. "The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

5. It appears from what has been said, that christians are very unwise and sinful in neglecting to rejoice in God. They all know that rejoicing in God affords them the purest and highest happiness, and that rejoicing in themselves, or in the world, deprives them of the happiness they have derived from rejoicing in God. They know, therefore, that they injure their own souls as well as injure God, by neglecting to obey the command which he has given them for their own good and his glory. They are more inconsistent and criminal in neglecting to rejoice in God, than sinners are in neglecting this duty. They often imagine that God cannot be a source of joy and rejoicing; and therefore they forsake God, the fountain of living waters, and hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. It is extremely unwise and sinful for those who have tasted the happiness which flows from rejoicing in God, to neglect deriving their happiness from God, and seek to obtain happiness from the world. Their neglecting this duty

not only diminishes their own happiness, but greatly dishonors religion. By their not always rejoicing in God, they lead the men of the world to conclude that their religion, instead of doing them any good, does them a great deal of hurt. It prevents them from rejoicing in any thing, and makes them more disconsolate and gloomy than those who have no religion, and pretend to none. It is a great blemish and imperfection in the character and conduct of christians, to suffer the trials and tribulations which God brings upon them to overwhelm them in sorrow, and to banish all joy and rejoicing from their hearts. David's conduct at the death of Absalom was highly displeasing to God, and to Joab, and to the people in general; and it was happy for him that Joab had courage and resolution to reprove him and bring him to right feelings and conduct. Christians who neglect to rejoice always, never fail to give occasion to the enemies of religion to think and speak reproachfully of it. Nor is this all the evil arising from neglecting to rejoice in God. It unfits them for all religious duties. When they neglect to see God, and to rejoice in him, they are always either in darkness, or stupidity; which makes every religious duty irksome, and leads to the neglect of those duties in which they once took peculiar pleasure and delight. While christians rejoice in the Lord, they are always active and constant in every religious duty; especially in times of trouble, sorrow, or mourning; and never enjoy more happiness, than they then derive from rejoicing in the Lord. These considerations ought to excite all christians to rejoice in the Lord always, as the most important and indispensable duty.

Finally, This subject calls upon sinners to renounce all their worldly and sinful joy, and to rejoice in God, who is the only source of pure and permanent joy. All other sources of joy and rejoicing will soon forsake you; and then you must be wretched indeed. You cannot begin to be truly happy, until you rejoice in God; and you cannot always be happy, unless you always rejoice in God. All the happiness of heaven will flow from rejoicing in God; and all the miseries of the damned will flow from the entire loss of this source of happiness. God is infinitely worthy of your supreme love and joy, on account of his essential and amiable perfections. And not only so, but also for what he has done for you, bestowed upon you, and offered to you. You will be the most ungrateful and guilty, as well as the most wretched creatures in the universe, if you continue to refuse to rejoice in God. You have no right to rejoice in any thing, so long as you neglect to rejoice in God. He calls you, therefore, to mourning; and you have reason to mourn for all your rejoicing, which God has forbidden. Be entreated then to rejoice in God immediately and for ever.

SERMON XII.

SAINTS DESIRE GOD TO PUNISH SINNERS.

Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors; give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert. — Psalm xxviii. 4.

These are the words of the man after God's own heart, who possessed pure benevolence, and who expressed the genuine feelings of his heart, in his address to the throne of divine grace. It appears from the preceding petitions, that he presented this with peculiar solemnity and tenderness. "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent to me, lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity." And to manifest the sincerity of his request, he continues to cry, "Give them according to their deeds and according to the wickedness of their endeavors; give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert." He had prayed that God would not draw him away with the wicked, nor cast his future and final lot among them. For they appeared so odious in his sight, and so deserving of the marks of the divine displeasure, that he could not only approve of their being punished, but could sincerely desire that God would punish them, for his own glory and the good of all holy beings. His petition is an expression of that love to holiness and hatred of sin, which reigns in every pious, benevolent heart. Hence we may justly draw this general conclusion;

Good men do desire God to punish finally impenitent sinners according to their deserts. I shall show,

I. Why impenitent sinners deserve to be punished.

II. That some impenitent sinners more deserve to be punished than others.

III. What is implied in God's punishing them according to their deserts. And,

IV. Why good men desire God to punish them according to their deserts.

I. Let us consider why impenitent sinners deserve to be punished.

It seems to be supposed in the text that there are three things for which they deserve to be punished, their deeds, their works, and their endeavors. But every one knows, there is no criminality or ill desert in mere external actions. Deeds and works are external actions, and, simply considered, have no criminality. The ill desert of sinners, therefore, consists in something different from their works, or deeds, or external actions; and the text suggests the only ground of their ill desert. "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors." Their wickedness lies in their endeavors, or their intentions to do evil. All sin consists in selfishness; and all selfishness lies in the heart. The heart is the seat of sin; and a sinful heart consists in sinful desires, intentions, or affections. When men desire, or intend, or endeavor to do evil, they are really guilty, and deserve to be punished. It is the dictate of common sense, that no man deserves to be punished for his conduct when he had no evil design in it; and it is equally the dictate of common sense, that every man deserves to be punished when he has intended, or endeavored to do evil. It is the character of all sinners that every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is evil, only evil continually. All their free, voluntary exercises are entirely selfish and criminal, for which they deserve to be punished. Sin and guilt are naturally and inseparably connected. Of this, all sinners are conscious. They know that when they commit sin they are guilty, and deserve to be punished. Joseph's brethren acknowledged that they were verily guilty, and deserved to be punished, for selling him into Egypt; and Judas condemned and punished himself, for betraying his Lord and Master. The hearts of impenitent sinners are fully set in them to do evil, for which they are conscious that they deserve to be punished, whether they are punished, or not punished. They know the reason why God threatens to punish them both in this life and the life to come. They know it is because they are continually committing sin, which is the abominable thing that God hates, and that he ought to punish them for. They know that sin creates guilt, and guilt creates desert of punishment. This leads us to consider,

II. That some sinners more deserve to be punished than others. So David thought when he said to God, "Give them according to the wickedness of their endeavors; render to them their desert." These phrases convey the idea that some sinners may be more ill deserving than others. This must be true, if ill desert is founded in the ill intention, or design of sinners. It is evident that one sinner may have a more selfish and malevolent design than another, and of course may be more deserving of punishment. Though all sinners act from selfish and sinister motives, yet they may act from different motives, and contract different degrees of guilt. One may design to take away a man's property, another may design to take away a man's life, and another may design to destroy a nation. These are all bad designs; but the second is worse than the first, and the third is worse than the second. Cain was more criminal than Achan, and Pharaoh was more criminal than Cain. It does not appear that Achan intended to destroy any man's life; but Cain meant to destroy his brother's life, and Pharaoh meant to destroy a whole nation. Ill desert is always in proportion to the ill design of the agent; and the ill design of the agent is always in proportion to the magnitude of the evil he designs to do. I know it is supposed that ill desert is to be measured by the strength and tendency of an evil intention. But neither the strength nor tendency of an evil intention, is the proper measure of ill desert. It is as criminal to kill a man in cool blood, as in a violent passion. This is the dictate of common sense, and agreeable to the laws of God and man. Cool, premeditated acts of killing are denominated murder; but violent and unpremeditated acts of killing are called manslaughter. And there is a just foundation for this distinction. The man who kills another from a cool, deliberate intention, has more time and opportunity of viewing the act in its nature and dreadful consequences, than the man who kills another suddenly and without previous consideration. Indeed, the badness of any evil intention does not depend upon the strength of the affection from which it flows, nor upon its evil tendency, any farther than its evil tendency is foreseen. Some imagine that every sinful exercise of heart is infinitely criminal and ill deserving, because it tends to do infinite mischief, and would produce this effect if it were not under a divine control. But granting here, what might be questioned, that every sin has a natural tendency to do infinite mischief if it were not divinely controlled, yet no man can be reasonably accountable for the evil tendency of his evil intention or action, any farther than he foresaw its evil tendency.

If every sinner were accountable for all the evil consequences of his evil actions, he could not so much as conjecture the

degree of guilt or ill desert that would be chargeable to his account. It must be supposed, therefore, that the sinner's guilt is only in proportion to the evil he intends to do, and not in proportion to the evil he may actually do, or would have done, had not his evil action been overruled, or restrained in its consequences. This may be illustrated by a scripture example. You remember that when David fled from Saul, he went to Nob, under a pretence of consulting Abimelech, the priest, and by deception induced him to give him the show-bread and Goliah's sword. This act was followed with most serious and fatal consequences. For when Saul was informed of it, he sent and destroyed four-score and five priests of the Lord. Now, if David did not foresee these fatal consequences of his conduct, what propriety could there be that he should be chargeable with them? If he had no thought that his deceiving Abimelech would have a tendency to destroy his father's house, how could he be guilty of murdering Abimelech and his father's house? His guilt could not extend any farther than his real intention extended; nor could he be chargeable for the evil tendency of his action any farther than he foresaw the consequences of it. And the same may be said of every other evil action. Its guilt cannot extend any farther than the agent's knowledge of its evil tendency extends. But so far guilt always will extend. The evil intention of a sinful agent is the exact measure of his guilt, or ill desert. And according to this measure, the guilt of one person may be much greater than the guilt of another. There is a great difference in the views and designs of sinners. Some act upon a smaller and some upon a larger scale. The sins of some men are much more heinous in the sight of God than others. This doctrine Christ abundantly taught. He represented some sins as motes and others as beams. He said, the servant that knew his master's will and did it not, should be beaten with many stripes. He said, if he had not come and spoken to the Jews, they had not had, comparatively, any sin. He said to Pilate, He that delivered me unto thee had the greater sin; meaning Caiaphas, the high priest. Though Pilate was guilty in condemning Christ, yet he was not so guilty as Caiaphas in delivering him into his hands. Caiaphas had more light than Pilate; and this rendered his guilt much greater than Pilate's. Pilate intended to crucify Christ to please the people; but Caiaphas intended to get Christ crucified to prevent the spread of the gospel. Caiaphas had a worse intention than Pilate, and his guilt was in proportion to the wickedness of his endeavors. Herod's guilt was in proportion to his evil intention, which was to destroy all the children in Bethlehem under two years old. And Paul's guilt was in

proportion to his evil intention, which was to destroy the whole Christian church. Thus it appears to be agreeable to scripture and reason, that some sinners more deserve to be punished than others, because their ill desert is always in proportion to the wickedness of their endeavors. The next thing is,

III. To show what is implied in God's punishing finally impenitent sinners according to their deserts. It has been shown that all sinners are guilty and ill deserving, but some are more guilty than others. The inquiry now is, What is implied in God's rendering to them according to their desert? And,

1. It implies his punishing them according to the duration of their desert. They deserve to be punished, because they have done evil of design. There is ill desert necessarily connected with every evil affection, desire, or intention, which they have freely and voluntarily formed. This ill desert will exist as long as they continue to exist; and, since they are to exist for ever, their ill desert will for ever exist, unless there be some cause to remove it. But what cause can remove their guilt? The atonement of Christ cannot remove it. For, notwithstanding he has tasted death for every man and died the just for the unjust, yet impenitent sinners are as guilty and ill deserving, as if Christ had never laid down his life for them; yea, they are unspeakably more guilty than if Christ had not made a propitiation for their sins, and offered salvation to them. His atonement will for ever increase, instead of removing, the guilt of finally impenitent sinners.

Again, Repentance cannot take away the guilt of those who go out of this world impenitent. For, if it could be supposed that they should repent after death, yet their repentance could have no tendency to remove their guilt. A robber, or murderer, may repent in this world after he is condemned to die; but his repentance has no tendency to remove his guilt, or save him from death. He still deserves to die, and all mankind approve of his execution. And if repentance cannot remove the desert of temporal death, surely it cannot remove the desert of eternal death.

Again, The ill desert of sinners cannot be removed by any temporary punishment. It is not the nature of punishment to take away criminality or ill desert. If punishment could take away guilt, then a guilty person might be punished till he became innocent. But who can conceive that punishment should produce this effect? What parent ever corrected his child with a view to make him innocent of the offence he had committed? What court of justice ever directed a criminal to be punished with a view to take away his criminality, and restore

him to innocence? The design of punishment is not to take away guilt, but to display justice. We cannot conceive that God can, by punishing a sinner for ages, or for any limited duration, remove his guilt and make him innocent. Now, if neither the atonement of Christ, nor sincere repentance, nor temporary punishment, can take away the ill desert of those who die impenitent; then their ill desert must remain for ever. But if their ill desert must remain for ever, then to punish them according to the duration of their ill desert, must be to punish them for ever. So that one thing implied in God's punishing sinners according to their deserts, is, punishing them according to the duration of their guilt, which will never cease. Besides,

2. His punishing them according to their deserts farther implies, his punishing them according to the degrees of their guilt. It appears from what has been said, that some will have greater degrees of guilt than others; and, therefore, it will be proper to measure the degrees of future punishment according to the degrees of guilt which the finally impenitent have contracted. Though the guilt of all be the same in respect to duration, and their punishment must be the same in respect to duration, yet the punishment which God will inflict upon them must be different in degrees, according to their different degrees of guilt. Justice seems to require that God should punish them according to their different degrees of ill desert. And scripture assures us that this will be the case in the great day of retribution. Christ expressly declares that it shall be more intolerable for some sinners than for others, in the day of judgment. It is the design of future punishment to display God's displeasure at sin; and, in order to display his displeasure at sin in the clearest light, he must dispense different punishments to those of different degrees of guilt. He is able to measure their different degrees of guilt, and the different degrees of punishment which they deserve; and he will not fail to "render to them their desert;" for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? It only remains to show,

IV. Why good men desire that God would punish the finally impenitent according to their deserts. We find that some of the best of men have sincerely desired God to inflict a just punishment upon all incorrigible sinners. David, not only in the text, but in a multitude of other places in the Psalms, imprecates the final destruction of the finally impenitent. He solemnly prays to God to "give them according to their deeds and according to the wickedness of their endeavors; give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert." Elijah prayed in the same spirit, and in the same language. "Wot ye not what the scripture says of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel." And the spirits of just

men made perfect cry to God, to give unto impenitent sinners their desert. John says, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them, that dwell on the earth?" These are divine declarations that good men do desire God to punish the finally impenitent according to their deserts. But it is still worthy of our serious inquiry, why the truly pious and benevolent do desire God to inflict eternal punishment upon any of their fellow creatures. Saints certainly have a clear and awful sense of eternal misery, and yet they desire God to inflict it upon the final enemies of all righteousness. What good reasons can they have for such a desire? Here I would say,

1. That it is the nature of true benevolence to love justice. The justice of God is a truly amiable and glorious attribute of his nature. It is an essential branch of his infinite benevolence. And since saints view the justice of God in this light, they must be pleased to see the displays of it upon the finally impenitent, who deserve the full execution of divine justice in their future and eternal punishment. Good men would not desire that God should punish them at all, if they did not deserve to be punished. It is their ill desert, that renders them proper subjects of punishment. And, as it has been shown that their ill desert will continue for ever, there is the same reason why they should be punished for ever, as why they should be punished at all; and the same reason why good men should desire God to punish them for ever according to their deserts, as why they should desire him to inflict the lightest and shortest punishment upon them. If good men love the justiee of God, they must love to see God display his justice in punishing those who deserved to be punished; and sincerely desire that he should continue to display his justice in punishing them, as long as they deserve to be punished, which will be to all eternity. There is precisely the same reason why good men should desire God to punish the finally impenitent for ever, as why they should desire him to punish them at all, either in this life, or in the life to come.

2. It is the nature of true love to God to desire that he may be glorified for ever. But he cannot be for ever glorified by the finally impenitent, without punishing them according to their deserts. They deserve eternal punishment, and God cannot free them from it by annihilation. It seems to be inconsistent with the moral rectitude of God to put an end to the existence of his sinful creatures, who deserve to feel the weight of his everlasting displeasure. But if he must continue them in existence for ever, he must either punish them for ever

according to their deserts, or else make them happy for ever contrary to their deserts, and contrary to the terms of salvation through the atonement of Christ. But he can do neither of these things, consistently with his glory. What then must he do, to glorify himself by the finally impenitent, but to punish them for ever? And for this reason, good men do sincerely desire that he should punish them for ever according to their deserts. Besides,

3. They desire he should punish them for ever, to promote the highest good of the universe. The just punishment of the wicked will always promote the holiness and happiness of all holy beings. Hence the apostle demands, "What if God, willing to show his wrath and make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" All good men ardently desire the purest and highest blessedness of all holy beings; and, for this reason, must desire that God would display the beauties of his justice, as well as the riches of his grace, by eternally rewarding both the righteous and the wicked, according to their works.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the ill desert of sinners essentially and necessarily consists in their free, voluntary design to do evil, then neither the foreknowledge, nor purpose, nor agency of God, can ever afford them the least ground or reason to complain of him for punishing them for ever. They will always know that God foreknew and decreed their final impenitence, and that his agency was concerned in fitting them for their final doom; but they will be for ever conscious that they acted freely and voluntarily in all their wicked endeavors and selfish conduct, for which, they themselves being judges, they deserve eternal punishment. As neither the foreknowledge, nor decree, nor agency of God, did prevent their ill desert in time, so neither the foreknowledge, nor decree, nor agency of God can remove their ill desert to all eternity. And just so long as their ill desert remains, and they are conscious of it, their mouths will be stopped, and they will feel that they have not the least ground or reason to complain of being punished for ever according to their deserts. If the foreknowledge, or decree, or agency of God ever did, or ever should remove their ill desert, then indeed they would have good ground to complain of God for making them what they are, and for punishing them for what they are. But all sinners, whether they believe or disbelieve the foreknowledge, decrees and agency of God, know that they are

really guilty; and if they are really guilty, they deserve to be punished; and God may justly punish them as long as they deserve to be punished. As they now know that they are guilty, so they always will know that they are guilty; and as they always will know that they are guilty, so they always will know that they have no ground or reason for complaining of God for punishing them for ever according to their deserts. The prophet puts the question to every impenitent sinner, "What wilt thou say, when he shall punish thee?" He will have nothing to say by way of complaint, any more than the man that was cast into outer darkness for being destitute of a wedding garment; "he was speechless."

2. If good men, for good reasons, desire God would punish the finally impenitent according to their deserts, then they are prepared to rejoice, when they shall see him display the glory of his justice in their future and eternal punishment. Though there may be something in a future state which shall prevent the righteous and the wicked from passing the one to the other, yet there is no reason to think that they will not be mutual spectators of each other's final condition. Though Christ, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, represents that there is an insurmountable bar of separation between Dives and Abraham and Lazarus, yet he represents them as spectators of each other's condition. Dives saw Abraham and Lazarus in their happy condition, and they saw him in his state of torment. And it is said of the worshipper of the beast, that "he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb;" that is, in the view of Christ and the angels. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the righteous will for ever see the displays of divine justice upon the vessels of wrath; and cordially rejoice in God, while they behold the smoke of their torments ascending for ever and ever. Though they will take no pleasure in the sin or misery of the damned, yet they will take pleasure in seeing a holy and righteous God give unto his impenitent and incorrigible enemies a just recompense of reward. Do not good men rejoice in the displays of divine justice in this world? Do they not rejoice when their armies engage in a just war, and slay thousands and thousands of their unjust and cruel enemies? Do they not approve of the appointment of days of thanksgiving, and spend them in public praise for the displays of divine justice in destroying those whom they believe deserve to be destroyed? Are they not then prepared to rejoice in far more bright displays of vindictive justice, in the future and eternal punishment of all the finally impenitent and incorrigible enemies of God and his kingdom? Their love to God and to the highest happiness of the universe cannot fail to prepare

them to unite with all the heavenly hosts, in crying "Amen, Alleluia," while they see the smoke of their torments ascending for ever and ever.

3. If good men desire God to punish the finally impenitent for ever, for the reasons that have been mentioned, then sinners will never have any just ground to reproach or complain of them for feeling and expressing such a desire. Many are stumbled at the language of the inspired writers, who so often imprecate divine judgments upon the incorrigibly wicked, and especially at the language of David in the text, and in various other psalms. They seem to suppose that such language breathes a malevolent spirit towards the enemies of God, which no man ought to feel or express. Dr. Watts was of this opinion, and accordingly omitted to versify some whole psalms. Expositors in general have supposed that such imprecations are not to be understood literally. Some have supposed that they are to be understood prophetically, and others that they are to be understood poetically. But there appears no difficulty in understanding them literally. They express the same spirit that God feels towards incorrigible sinners, and the same spirit that he expresses in actually punishing them according to their deserts. He feels no malevolence towards those whom he punishes for ever, and takes no pleasure in the eternal death of the wicked; but he takes pleasure in doing justly, as well as in loving mercy. And the friends of God ought to take no pleasure in the misery of the damned; but they ought to take pleasure in seeing God do justly, as well as in seeing him display mercy. The reasons we have given, why good men desire God to punish the finally impenitent according to their deserts, are these three; first, their love of the attribute of divine justice, secondly, their love to the glory of God, and thirdly, their sincere regard for the good of the universe. These are sound reasons why pious and benevolent men should desire God to punish the finally impenitent for ever, and discover not the least malevolence towards the wicked; who will never, therefore, have the least ground to reproach them for their benevolent desire. I have heard it scoffingly said, that those who expect and desire that God should punish the finally impenitent for ever, appear to hope that they shall for ever enjoy a malicious pleasure in seeing the misery of the damned. But this is a groundless and unjust reproach cast upon the truly pious and benevolent. Though they will for ever rejoice in the displays of divine justice, yet they will not rejoice in the effects of divine justice upon the wicked. Who can suppose that Adam or Abel will rejoice in the misery of Cain? Who can suppose that Aaron will rejoice in the misery of Nadab and Abihu? Who can

suppose that David will rejoice in the misery of Absalom? But those parents, with all their benevolence towards their offspring, will say, "Amen," while they for ever behold the tokens of their torments; nor will their miserable offspring have the least reason to reproach or complain of their pious parents and friends, for rejoicing in the displays of divine justice upon them. Scoffers in this world may reproach and blame God, and his friends, for approving divine justice displayed towards the spirits in prison; but, whenever they come into the other world, they will be fully convinced that they have no being to blame but themselves, for the miseries they endure. Indeed, all the objections that were ever made or felt against the future fate of the finally impenitent, have arisen from a misapprehension, or misrepresentation of the nature and tendency of pure, universal, disinterested benevolence.

4. If good men desire God to punish the finally impenitent for ever, then they have no more reason to disbelieve and oppose the doctrine of reprobation, than the doctrine of election. Though all good Calvinists believe and love the doctrine of election, yet many of them dislike and oppose the doctrine of reprobation. They love the doctrine of election, because it displays the sovereign grace of God towards the vessels of mercy, but dislike and oppose the doctrine of reprobation, because it displays the vindictive justice of God towards the vessels of wrath. But how can they consistently love the divine attribute of grace, while they hate the divine attribute of justice? If they approve of God's conduct in choosing some to eternal life, and preparing them by his special grace for future and eternal happiness, and finally putting them into possession of it; why should they not approve of his conduct in reprobating some to eternal destruction, and preparing them for it, and finally inflicting it upon them? The truth is, all good Calvinists deceive themselves, when they love the doctrine of election, and do not love the doctrine of reprobation. But those who do really hate the doctrine of reprobation, deceive themselves when they think they love the doctrine of election. This inconsistency is altogether wrong and unjustifiable, in both cases. Those who love God for electing some to eternal life, and to the means that lead to it, ought to examine the subject critically and impartially, and see the inseparable connection between election and reprobation, and cordially approve of both. And those who do not love the doctrine of reprobation, nor consequently the doctrine of election, ought to examine the subject critically and impartially, and see their intimate connection; and in this way, and in this way only, make their calling and election sure.

5. If guilt or ill desert consists in the evil intentions of the heart, then there is a wide difference between awakenings and convictions. Sinners are commonly awakened before they are convinced. They are often greatly alarmed in the view of future and eternal misery, while their conscience is not awakened to convince them of their guilt and desert of the punishment they fear and dread. It is one thing to be sensible of their danger, and another thing to be sensible of their guilt. While sinners are merely awakened to see their danger, their hearts rise against God, complain of the penalty of his law, call him a hard master, oppose the doctrine of election, and of reprobation, condemn their Maker, and justify themselves. But when their conscience awakes, it condemns all their free, voluntary exercises and actions as altogether selfish and sinful, and real transgressions of the law of love. The commandment comes, sin revives, and they die. They measure their guilt by the divine law, which places it not in their external conduct, but in their internal intentions, desires and designs. They find that whatever the law saith, either in its precept or penalty, it saith to them. Their mouths are stopped, and they become entirely guilty before God, and feel that they justly deserve that eternal punishment which he has threatened to inflict upon them. Such genuine conviction prepares them for a sound conversion, if God sees fit to change their hearts. And none have a right to think that their hearts are changed, if their consciences have not been thus convinced.

6. If guilt or ill desert consists in the selfish and sinful affections of the heart, then we may see why moral sinners commonly experience the deepest convictions before they are converted. They are not so easily awakened and alarmed, as more open and profligate sinners. Their external conduct excites their fear. They see that they are externally worse than others, and imagine that God views them as much worse, and is more disposed to destroy them, than less vicious sinners; which throws them into great anxiety and distress. But moral sinners view themselves better than others, and imagine that God views them better, and feels less disposed to punish them so severely as others. If God comes and awakens the young, the vain, and externally bold and obstinate, they feel whole and secure; for they are not as other men, who openly defy and trifle with sacred and divine things. But when the Holy Spirit awakens their consciences, and shows them the plague of their hearts, they are far from thinking that they are better than other sinners. They are convinced that not only their externally bad actions, but their externally good actions, have been altogether selfish and criminal, and rendered them worthy of God's wrath

and curse, both in this world and the world to come. They see the nature and ill desert of sin, which destroys all their former false notions of being better than others, and all their false hopes founded upon their false opinion of themselves. It is not so much the sense of danger, as the sense of guilt, that presses them down and pushes them to the borders of despair. They view themselves far worse, instead of better than other men. They are ready to imagine that God will more readily pardon the sins of other men, but their own sins appear too great to be forgiven. They have thought, and read, and heard more than the vain and stupid; but they have done nothing but abuse the light and knowledge they have received, by which their guilt has been ten fold augmented. This is the distressing case of moral sinners under convictions; whether they have, or have not neglected the means of grace, or whether they have, or have not professed to love religion. Sinners are generally stout hearted under awakenings, but when their conscience is wounded with a sense of guilt, they have more than they can bear, and are constrained to stoop.

7. Since all guilt or ill desert consists in the evil affections of the heart, it is easy to see why good men have been so much borne down with the burden of sin. Job, David, and Paul had a deep and habitual sense of their great criminality and guilt. The reason was, they had experienced keen convictions of conscience before they were converted; and this made their conscience always tender afterwards. You may have remarked it, that those who have appeared to have the deepest conviction before they were converted, have generally appeared to have the most tender conscience, and to be the most afraid of stifling it, or acting against its dictates and remonstrances. And so long as good men keep their conscience alive, it will do its office, cause them to keep their heart with all diligence, condemn them for every deviation from the path of duty, and teach them to see, to feel, and lament their great moral imperfections in the sight of God. Good men are much more troubled with their hearts from day to day, than sinners are with their hearts. They see the nature and ill desert of sin, and feel that they deserve eternal death, though they hope to enjoy eternal life. They groan, being burdened, and cry with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They judge and condemn themselves, and the divine law judges and condemns them. They accept the punishment of their iniquities, and realize that they deserve to be destroyed more than any they know of, who ever have been, or ever will be destroyed.

Finally: In the view of this subject, impenitent sinners may

see their guilty and deplorable condition. Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart has been evil, only evil, continually. They have never felt as they ought to feel, nor acted as they ought to act. They have been constantly adding sin to sin, and increasing their load of guilt, by which they have forfeited the favor of God and of all good beings. They have despised the love of God in sending his Son to redeem them. They have despised the love of Christ in dying for them. They have despised the salvation he has offered to them. And now, what can they say if God should punish them for ever, according to their deserts? They must be speechless. What will their pious friends and dearest relatives say, if they should see them lifting up their eyes in torments? We know they will say, "Amen, Alleluia." They will not have a friend in the universe that will take their part. All heaven will justify God, and condemn them. Those who once sincerely prayed that they might repent and flee from the wrath to come, will be pleased to see God glorify his justice upon those who refused to repent and give glory to him. Can their hands be strong or their heart endure, in the day that God shall deal with them, and make them completely friendless and hopeless for ever? But some may ask, Can all this be true? Ask your pious father and mother, your pious brother and sister, or any of your pious friends, and they will tell you that all this is true; and perhaps they have often told you so. But if you are still in doubt, ask your own consciences, and they will tell you so. The only reason why you do not now feel yourselves to be in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity, is, because you have neglected or refused to see the plague of your own hearts; and to realize that ill desert which you constantly carry about with you, and which will infallibly bind you over to everlasting destruction, except you repent. And what reason have you to hope you will ever repent? Neither the word, nor providence, nor patience of God, have yet brought you to repentance. God may justly let you alone, and leave you to fill up the measure of your sins, and treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and your final doom. There may be but a step between you and both temporal and eternal death. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

SERMON XIII.

THE CHARACTER, CONDUCT AND STATE OF JUDAS.

It had been good for that man, if he had not been born. — Matthew, xxvi. 24.

Our Lord, the same night in which he was betrayed, called together his twelve disciples to celebrate the Passover. On that solemn occasion, he informed them of one peculiar circumstance of his approaching death, which he had never hinted to them before, and which deeply affected their hearts. "As they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful; and began every one to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him; but wo unto that man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed: It had been good for that man, if he had not been born."

The text naturally leads us to make several observations respecting Judas, the person of whom the Saviour here speaks. In these observations, I intend to exhibit from the scriptures a statement of plain facts, which are stubborn things, and which bring irresistible evidence in favor of whatever doctrines are justly deduced from them. And to begin:

1. Judas was a man. He was one of the natural descendants of Adam. He was the son of Simon. Twice he is called the son of Simon, and twice Simon's son. Christ, who perfectly knew him, calls him a man, in the text. And though elsewhere he calls him a devil, yet he evidently calls him so figuratively, as having the spirit of the devil, or rather as being possessed of him, and instigated by him, after he had received

the sop, to betray his divine Master. Hence it is evident that he was a fallen man, under the influence of a fallen angel.

Now Judas, as a man, possessed all the powers and faculties which belong to human nature. He was endued with perception, memory, reason, conscience, and volition. These he exercised and manifested, as clearly as the other apostles. He was no more nor less dependent upon God than other men. He was a free, moral agent. He acted of choice and design in the view of motives. For we know of some of the motives, in view of which he acted from time to time. There is no intimation that he was the least of the apostles, as to natural powers and abilities. In this respect he was, no doubt, upon a level with the rest of his fellow men and fellow apostles.

2. Judas was a man whom God was pleased to treat with distinguishing favor. He blessed him with a rational and immortal spirit. He formed him wiser than the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven, and made him but little lower than the angels. And he gave him his birth in a happy place; not in the dark corners of the Western world, but in the most enlightened part of Asia; in the land of Canaan, where he had fixed the residence of his chosen people, and deposited his sacred oracles. He also gave him his birth at a happy time; just as Christ was making his appearance among men, as the Saviour of the world; a time which Abraham, Moses and the prophets would have esteemed it a signal favor to have seen. Moreover, he gave him an opportunity to become personally acquainted with Christ, and to be admitted into the number of his apostles, who were his constant attendants. In a word, God raised Judas to heaven in point of privileges.

3. God used no compulsive measures to lead him into sin. He neither commanded, nor advised him to sin; nor once intimated that he should be pleased with his sinning. He never compelled him to love or hate; or to say or do any thing whatever, contrary to his own inclination. Of this we have the best evidence; even the evidence of Judas against himself. When he stood in the most pressing need of some excuse to exculpate himself, not only before God and the world, but before his own conscience, he brings no complaint against God; nor attempts to plead the least degree of compulsion to act wickedly, contrary to the voluntary exercises of his own heart. He confesses he betrayed innocent blood; he acknowledges the action to be his own; he feels and takes all the blame to himself, though it sinks him into horror and despair. But,

4. Instead of being compelled to sin, he had the most powerful means used with him to restrain him from it. He enjoyed the writings of Moses and the prophets, and the living exam-

ple of the Son of God. He was placed under the watch and care of Christ; and heard the gracious words which fell from his lips. He heard his sermon on the mount, the parables of the sower, the talents, the tares, the ten virgins, the prodigal, the unjust steward, the rich fool, and Dives and Lazarus. As these were designed to expose the guilt and danger of hypocrisy, covetousness and injustice, so they were adapted to fasten conviction upon his guilty conscience, and restrain him from that treason and murder which finally proved his ruin. He was likewise a witness of the supernatural and miraculous works of Christ. He beheld the eyes of the blind opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the tongues of the dumb unloosed, the feet of the lame strengthened, the disorders of the sick removed, and even the reason of the insane and the life of the dead restored, by the almighty voice of the compassionate Redeemer. And when all these united, it is hard to conceive what stronger motives could be set before him, or what greater restraints could be laid upon him, to guard him from sin. Yet,

5. Judas was a prodigy of wickedness. All the time he followed Christ, and carried the bag, and preached the gospel, he inwardly cherished a selfish, sordid and thievish spirit. His heart was a cage of unclean and hateful affections. His whole conduct proceeded from base, mean and sinful motives. Yet he was such a profound hypocrite, that he concealed the turpitude of his heart from the eye of the world, and even from the view of his fellow apostles, who were more ready to suspect their own integrity, than his treachery. "But the way of transgressors is hard." It is difficult for any one always to wear the mask. It is exceedingly apt to fall off in some unguarded moment, and expose the real complexion to open view. This was the case with Judas. As soon as a temptation, agreeable to his predominant passion, was presented, it immediately disclosed the blackness of his heart, and branded him a base and subtle traitor. He betrayed innocent blood. He plotted and procured the death of the greatest and most amiable personage that ever made his appearance on earth. He, whom he betrayed, was fairer than the sons of men. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was one whom all heaven loved, revered and adored; one whom the other apostles loved with supreme affection, and for whom they cheerfully laid down their lives. He was one for whom Judas himself ought to have been willing to die, and solemnly engaged to do it. He was one who came to suffer and die for Judas, that he might not perish, but have everlasting life. Such a person he betrayed and murdered, for thirty pieces of silver! Such was the sin of Judas. Hence,

6. Judas deserved eternal perdition. This single crime, had he been guilty of no other, rendered him justly obnoxious to the eternal abhorrence and indignation of God and man. What would a kind and tender parent think of the villain who had imbrued his hands in the blood of his only son? How must Judas then appear in the eyes of God, when he had betrayed the Son of his love! The wages of his sin, therefore, ought to be death, even eternal death. Nothing less could be a punishment adequate to his crime. And Judas, himself, when he came to reflect upon the guilty scenes of his life, his hypocrisy, his avarice, his treason and murder, which he had perpetrated against the clear light of his own conscience, and the solemn warnings of heaven, was plunged into the depths of horror and guilt. He was conscious to himself that he had merited the just displeasure of God and man; that he deserved to lie down in sorrow; and that hell was his proper place. And these convictions, at length, rose so high, that he chose rather to feel, than fear the torments of the damned. And therefore he resolved to plunge himself into the regions of darkness and despair, by the violence of his own guilty hand. Wherefore,

7. It is certain that Judas is finally lost. He lived wickedly and died wickedly. And therefore he is finally lost. Christ, who perfectly knew him from the beginning, said he had the heart of a devil, and was the son of perdition, and was lost, that the scripture might be fulfilled. The eleven apostles, after the crucifixion of Christ, in a devout address to heaven, solemnly declare that Judas, not only by death, but by transgression, had fallen from his ministry and apostleship, that he might go to his own place; that is, the place of perdition, of which he was son and heir. But our Lord's declaration in the text, that it had been good for him if he had not been born, fixes the certainty of his eternal destruction beyond the least possibility of doubt. Christ absolutely knew both his character and condition. And yet he asserted that his state is worse than non-existence. But this cannot be true, if, at death, like pious Lazarus, or the penitent thief, he was conducted to the paradise of God, and conveyed to Abraham's bosom; nor if, at death, he was annihilated, or struck out of existence; nor if he was only sent to the popish purgatory; nor if, indeed, his punishment shall ever come to an end, at any period, however distant. If his punishment should continue for years, or for ages, or for as many millions of ages as there are stars in the firmament, or sands upon the sea shore; yet if, after this period, or any other limited duration expires, he shall be freed from misery, and admitted to heaven, and there spend an endless eternity in the

love, service and enjoyment of God, it will be good for him that he was born; and his existence, upon the whole, will be an unspeakable blessing. Therefore we must either deny the veracity of Christ, or believe that Judas is finally and eternally lost.

If Christ's promise to the apostles should be objected here, I answer, that promise depends upon the truth of Peter's declaration. Let us, therefore, hear and compare both the declaration and promise. "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye, that have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This dignity Christ promises to confer on the apostles, on the condition of their having forsaken all and followed him. But though Peter really thought that they all had performed this condition, yet he was under a great mistake. For Judas, of whose character he was then and afterwards ignorant, never had been regenerated, nor forsaken all for Christ, nor followed him from supreme love to him. Therefore the promise did not apply to him. He had no portion nor lot in that matter. Accordingly Christ excluded him from the number of his apostles, in his last prayer. These are his words: "I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; for they are thine. — Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. — Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." This prayer, together with Christ's declaration in our text, absolutely cuts off Judas from every promise of favor, and seals his eternal destruction sure. I proceed to observe,

8. That God decreed the life, the death, and final state of Judas, before he was born. Judas was a very extraordinary person. Many of his actions were singular and peculiar to himself; such as were never done by any other person before nor since. Nor could they have been done by himself, had he been born in any other age, or lived in any other part of the world. And these peculiarities, we may presume, did not meet in Judas by mere chance, but were designed and effected by the Supreme Being. Accordingly we find that Judas, like other remarkable persons, particularly Josiah and Cyrus, was foretold and characterized, ages before he was born. David had him in his view, when he wrote the ninth verse of the forty-first Psalm. "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

This prophecy Christ applies to Judas, in the eighteenth verse of the thirteenth chapter of John's gospel. He says, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but, that the scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me." And in the twenty-sixth verse he expressly mentions Judas, as the person described. The untimely end of Judas is also foretold and described by David, in the sixty-ninth psalm. Having represented the bitter circumstances of Christ's crucifixion, he proceeds to denounce the fearful ruin of such persons as should be concerned in his death. "Let their table become a snare before them; and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents." This prophetic denunciation of divine wrath against the murderers of Christ, the apostle Peter applies particularly to Judas, in the first chapter of the Acts. "In those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, the field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and his bishoprick let another take." Now David lived above a thousand years before the birth of Judas. Consequently the life and death and end of Judas were decreed and foretold, above a thousand years before he was born, which affords a strong presumption that they were decreed from eternity. And, indeed, this is more than intimated by the apostle Peter. He said, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." If the actions of Judas were decreed, no doubt his life and death, and every thing respecting him through his whole existence, were also decreed. And if they were ever decreed, they must have been decreed from eternity. For any new thought, purpose or de-

sign in the divine mind, must be inconsistent with the absolute immutability of the Divine Being. Hence it is evident that Judas was a reprobate, a son of perdition, and ordained from eternity to eternal destruction. Yet,

9. God brought Judas into being to answer wise and noble designs. God created all things, according to his eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. He had the scheme of redemption in view, before he laid the foundation of the world. He intended to save some of the human race, through the death of his Son. But if his Son, who was holy and harmless, must die, he must die by the hand of a wicked instrument. Accordingly, if the death of Christ must be fixed, the instrument of his death must also be fixed. Hence it was as necessary that Judas should be born, as that Christ should be born; and that Judas should betray him, as that he should die. Therefore the life and conduct of Judas were connected with the glorious scheme of man's redemption. He was not a cipher in the world, but an important instrument, in the hand of God, of accomplishing the great purposes of his grace. These glorious ends were present in the mind of God, when he decreed the existence, character, conduct, and state of Judas. And that he formed him to be an instrument of accomplishing these ends, appears evident from his foretelling his existence, and describing his character and conduct, ages before he was born. By this he has taught us what were his designs in giving existence to Judas. As we know God raised up Cyrus to be the deliverer of his people from the Babylonish captivity, because he foretold his life, and appointed him to that object, long before his existence; so we know that God raised up Judas to do those actions and answer those ends which he had foretold ages before he was born. Though God knew that Judas would be miserable for ever, and that it would have been good for him if he had never been born, yet he did not bring him into being for the sake of his misery, but for the sake of his own glory in the salvation of myriads of the human race. And this end was a good, infinitely superior to the ruin of one person. God, therefore, had the greatest, wisest, and best end, in decreeing and effecting the eternal perdition of Judas.

I have now finished my observations upon Judas. It has been my object to exhibit his character, conduct and state, in the plain and clear light of truth. I have mentioned several particulars concerning him, not because they were important in themselves, but to open the way for some deductions, which may, perhaps, appear with more advantage and perspicuity, from such a minute detail of circumstances. On this subject, however, truth is the only thing which we ought to regard. If

the preceding observations are but true, they will establish some points of weighty and solemn importance upon a firmer foundation than visionary speculation, or metaphysical arguments. You will allow me, then, to request your attention and candor, while I make a few deductions from the subject which has been under our consideration.

1. This instance of the son of perdition subverts the scheme of universal salvation. Though this scheme has lately been propagated with great zeal, boldness and confidence, and has gained a multitude of proselytes, yet it has no better foundation than falsehood and delusion. For it is contrary to plain fact. Judas is lost. And this single instance of perdition overthrows all the arguments that ever have been advanced, or ever can be invented, in favor of the final salvation of the whole human race.

Is it said, that from eternity Christ was so united to mankind, that when he appeared and acted as Mediator on earth, his actions were our actions, his obedience our obedience, and his sufferings our sufferings? and, that he has removed the curse of the law from the whole posterity of Adam, and entitled all mankind, without act on their part, to eternal salvation? This notion is not only absurd in its own nature, but contrary to plain fact. Judas, who was a son of Adam, and the son of perdition, is finally lost.

Is it said, that God could have no other motive in the creation of mankind than their happiness; and that, consequently, they must all be finally happy? This notion is also contrary to fact. God did not create Judas merely to make him happy; for he knew from eternity that it would have been good for him if he had not been born.

Is it said, that the mercy of God will not suffer any of the human race to perish eternally? This also is in the face of plain fact. The mercy of God has suffered the son of perdition to be eternally lost.

Is it said, that men are the offspring of God, and a part of the divine essence, so that his punishing them would be the same as punishing himself, which is absurd? Even this is but a bold supposition against plain fact. Judas was a man, and as nearly allied to the great Father of spirits as any other man. Yet God has banished him from his presence, and consigned him to eternal perdition.

These arguments, and all other arguments that can be urged in favor of universal salvation, are lighter than a feather, when thrown into the scale against this plain fact, the perdition of Judas. This single instance as effectually subverts the scheme of universal salvation, as a thousand. If one of mankind may be finally lost, then two may, or twenty, or twenty millions.

Indeed, if one may be lost, we can fix no limitation to the number that may finally perish. If one has been lost, if Judas is in hell, we have reason to think that Cain is there; that the old world, swept away by the Flood, are there; that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are there; that Pharaoh and his hosts are there; that the Israelites, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, are there; that the nations of Canaan, who were destroyed from the earth in the days of Joshua, are there; that the blinded Jews of Christ's day are there; that Simon Magus, Herod, Ananias and Sapphira are there; and that vast numbers of mankind, in every age and every part of the world, who have since lived and died in impenitence and unbelief, are also there. And myriads and myriads more may yet go to the same place of torment. Without any question, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there be which go in thereat."

2. This instance of Judas removes all the objections that ever have been made, or can be made, against the doctrine of divine decrees; and even the most obnoxious part of it, the doctrine of reprobation. This doctrine is true in fact. Judas was a reprobate. Though there is, perhaps, no other doctrine more fully asserted in the scriptures, or more easily demonstrated from the perfections of God, than the doctrine of decrees, yet, of all doctrines, this has been the most strenuously opposed and absolutely denied. Many objections, and some very plausible, have been urged against it. However, they must all be equally refuted by this single instance of Judas.

It is said, If God has appointed any to destruction from eternity, then he could have no other end in bringing them into existence, but their destruction. But this is a groundless objection. For God appointed Judas to destruction from eternity; yet he had nobler ends than his destruction in giving him his existence. He formed him to be an instrument of promoting his own glory in the salvation of sinners. And for this end he gave him his existence, and sent him to destruction. Therefore it is possible, and from the rectitude of the divine character it is absolutely certain that God aims at wise and good ends in the existence of the non-elect, and does not delight, simply, in their destruction. The apostle Paul, who was a bold and noble asserter of the doctrines of election and reprobation, never maintained, but positively denied, that God made any of mankind merely to destroy them. Though he declares that God intended to destroy Pharaoh, yet he asserts that he raised him up, not for this purpose, but for another, truly noble and excellent: That his name might be declared throughout all the earth. And speaking of the reprobate Jews, in distinction

from the remnant according to the election of grace, he denies that God had no other end in their existence than their misery and ruin. "I say, then, have they stumbled, that they should fall? God forbid! but rather through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles." As if he had said, It would be impious to suppose that God designed the Jews should stumble, merely that they might fall and be lost. No; far be such a thought from our hearts. The truth is, God had a wise and gracious design in their stumbling at Christ, the rock of offence; even to break down the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and open the way to send the salvation of the gospel to the ends of the earth. God never destroys any human being for the sake of his destruction, but for the glory of his great name, and for the highest interest of his holy kingdom.

It is said, The doctrine of decrees is repugnant to free agency. If God decrees all the actions of men, then, it is said, the freedom of willing and acting is destroyed. But was not Judas a free agent? Did he not act freely in all his conduct? Was he not voluntary in following Christ, in professing to love him, in carrying the bag, in preaching the gospel, in betraying Christ for thirty pieces of silver, and finally, in laying violent hands upon his own life? Indeed, was there ever a man who enjoyed greater freedom than Judas? Or can we conceive of a man's possessing and exercising greater freedom than he did, through the whole course of his life? Yet his life, conduct, death and state, were decreed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The divine decrees, therefore, are in fact consistent with free agency. If Judas acted freely, then every other man may act freely, notwithstanding the divine decrees.

It is said, The doctrines of election and reprobation are inconsistent with the use of means; that if God has decreed to save some of mankind and to destroy the rest, then it is in vain to teach, warn, counsel, command, or use any means with men to bring them to God, the end being already fixed and decreed. But, not to insist upon the inseparable connection between means and ends, I will only observe, that this objection had no weight in the mind of Christ. He knew that God had decreed to destroy Judas and save the rest of the apostles. Yet he was indefatigable in teaching, commanding, warning and counselling his disciples, and Judas among the rest. Whatever others may think, Christ thought the doctrine of decrees to be consistent with the use of means. And if Christ was right in his opinion, then others are wrong in making this objection.

It is said, The doctrines of election and reprobation carry the idea of partiality in the divine Being, which is a blemish in

his character. But this objection does not lie against the divine decrees, but the divine conduct. God did choose Paul, and reprobate Judas. And if God's *doing* this was not partiality, neither was his *decreeing* to do it. Partiality does not consist in God's treating one man differently from another, but in his treating one man differently from another without any reason for it. Hence God's choosing some to life, and appointing others to death, for wise and holy reasons, implies no partiality in the divine affections or conduct.

It is said, The doctrine of decrees, in its full extent, implies that God brings some men into a state that is worse than non-existence, which is inconsistent with his goodness. It is readily granted that God does bring some men into existence in a state worse than non-existence. He did so in respect to Judas. It had been good for that man if he had not been born. But how this should be considered an objection against divine goodness, when God does it, as in the case of Judas, with a view to his own glory and the greatest good of the universe, it is hard to conceive ; since it is a clear demonstration of the contrary. Thus the doctrines of election and reprobation stand confirmed against all objections, beyond a doubt. For there is no reasoning against facts. And it is a plain fact that God has elected and appointed a part of mankind to salvation, and reprobated the other part of mankind to destruction. So long as the case of Judas stands recorded in the word of God, the Bible must be renounced, or the doctrines of election and reprobation must be believed.

3. It appears, from the instance of Judas, that sin may be the occasion of good. It has been so in one case, and it may be so in other cases. It is certain that the sin of Judas was the occasion of good. His betraying his Lord and Master was a sin of the first magnitude, and perhaps, all circumstances considered, the greatest sin that ever was committed by men or devils. Yet it proved the occasion of the greatest blessings that ever came to our fallen race. It was the occasion of all the benefits of Christ's redemption. If it be asked, What is intended by sin's being the occasion of good ; I answer, The same that is meant by a murder's being the occasion of an excellent sermon. Not that the murder makes the sermon, but that the murder is that, without which the preacher would not and could not make the sermon, adapted to that particular occurrence of divine providence. So sin, in itself, does not make good, but is that without which some good cannot take place. Now if the sin of Judas may, in this sense, be the occasion of good, then the sin of any other man, or of all mankind, may be the occasion of good in the same sense. There is no absurdity in the supposition. And if it be possible in the

nature of things for sin to be the occasion of good, then it is certain, from the rectitude of the divine character, that it will be so. God would neither introduce sin into the world, nor suffer it to exist, but for the wisest and best ends. So that we may, with the Psalmist, be assured that the wrath of man shall praise the Lord, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. God will so order and govern the conduct of men, that no more sin shall exist than shall be the occasion of good.

4. The case of Judas shows that sin's being the occasion of good is no excuse for the sinner. It was none to Judas. He felt as guilty as if no benefit had ever come to the world by his sin. And whilst he beholds the whole number of the redeemed, through the blood of Christ, in the mansions of eternal blessedness, it will never afford him the least excuse for betraying innocent blood. He will be conscious to himself that he never desired nor intended that good by betraying Christ; and therefore that his guilt is the same as if no good had flowed from his crime. And it is true of every sinner, that his guilt is not the least extenuated by the good that may arise from his sins. God's end in the taking place of sin is directly opposite to the sinner's. God aims at good, but the sinner aims at evil. So it was with the king of Assyria. To him God said, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation; against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down, like the mire of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." On account of his intention and design, the Assyrian monarch was inexcusably guilty, and deserved the divine indignation. Accordingly God threatens to punish him for his ambition and cruelty. "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." The conduct of sinners is as evil, guilty and hateful in its own nature, as it would be, if no good were ever occasioned by its existence. And therefore the wise and holy conduct of God, in causing good to arise from the existence of evil, can never afford sinners any excuse for their sinful conduct. Hence,

5. Sin's being the occasion of good affords no encouragement to commit sin. Sin brings both guilt and punishment upon the sinner. It did upon Judas. Behold the guilty, miserable man! He betrays innocent blood. His conscience awakes and condemns him. He comes trembling and throws down the thirty pieces of silver, the reward of iniquity. He confesses

his guilt, and sinks down into horror and despair, under the stings of a guilty conscience. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" He feels the worm that never dies, and tastes the beginning of eternal sorrows. His punishment is greater than he can bear. He can conceive of nothing more terrible in the bottomless pit, than his present anguish and torment. And, therefore, by the violence of his own hands, he plunges himself into the regions of darkness and despair. There he lies, bound in chains unto the judgment of the great day, when he shall appear with shame and contempt, hear his fearful doom, and sink again into the fire that never shall be quenched. Endless punishment, torment and despair in hell, are all the encouragement there is to sin. God will render "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Hence,

6. Sinners will have no excuse, if they abuse the means of grace, reject the offers of life, and expose themselves to eternal ruin. One of their number has made the awful experiment, and found himself without hope and without excuse. And those who tread in his steps, will come to the same end. They will have no excuse for their wickedness and misery, from the patience of God, from the native corruption of their hearts, nor from the divine decrees. Their mouths will be shut; and they will stand guilty and confounded before God. Into such a state Judas brought himself by his own voluntary and desperate wickedness. And every sinner will find that his guilt is all his own, and that he alone must bear it, though it sinks him into endless torment and despair. Therefore,

To conclude, Let every sinner be entreated to flee from the wrath to come. Be assured there is wrath to come, and that your damnation slumbereth not. Notwithstanding the mercy of God in the gift of Christ, the common smiles of divine providence upon you, and the patience and forbearance of God towards you, yet it is in the heart of God to send you down to the pit of wo and despair, if you do not repent, and believe, and obey the gospel. He treated Judas as kindly in this life as he has treated you. And yet he has turned him into hell for his sins. And he will treat you in the same awful manner. Be entreated, then, by the terrors of the Lord, by the mercy of Christ, by the joys of heaven, and by the torments of hell, to fall down immediately before the righteous God, and not only confess your sins, as Judas did, but heartily repent, and truly believe the gospel, and give up yourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." He that repents and believes, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.

SERMON XIV.

THE HEAVENLY HOSTS PRAISE GOD FOR HIS JUSTICE.

And again they said, Alleluia. — Revelation, xix. 3.

John, the last of the apostles, wrote this book while in banishment in the Isle of Patmos. He was favored with extraordinary visions of the heavenly world, and inspired to foretell the most important changes which were to pass over the world, from his day to the end of time. From the fourteenth chapter to the close of the book, he gives a very striking representation of the increase and prosperity of the church, and the final overthrow of Babylon, which mystically represents antichrist, the great head of all opposition to it. He says, "I looked and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." This Lamb was an emblem of Christ, surrounded by those whom he had redeemed from the earth. After the safe arrival of the church in heaven, he says there followed another angel, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." And after these things he says, "I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying Alleluia: Salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." Alleluia signifies, Praise ye the Lord. This is the truth which lies on the face of the text:

The heavenly host will praise God for punishing the finally impenitent for ever.

It is proposed to show, in the first place, that they will praise God for punishing the finally impenitent for ever; and then to inquire, why they will do it.

I. I am to show that the heavenly hosts will praise God for punishing the finally impenitent for ever.

1. This appears from the representations of scripture. The church of God on earth sang praises to God for the display of his justice in the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. When the people of God had passed through it on dry ground, and saw the Egyptians overwhelmed in the merciless waves, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." And the apostle John heard the inhabitants of heaven sing this same song in praise of God, for destroying his impenitent and incorrigible enemies. When the seven angels, who had the seven last plagues to inflict upon the wicked world as marks of God's just and awful displeasure, were prepared to pour out the vials of divine wrath, then John heard them "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." When Isaiah had a vision of heaven, and of the desolating judgments which God had sent upon the wicked upon earth, he heard the heavenly hosts cry one unto another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah and John were eye and ear witnesses of the feelings and language of the heavenly world, in the view of God's vindictive justice in punishing the wicked. They assure us that the heavenly hosts do actually praise God for displaying his righteous and holy displeasure against the enemies of all righteousness. They cry Alleluia, when they behold the smoke of their torments rising up for ever and ever. This leads me to observe,

2. These representations are perfectly agreeable to the character of perfectly holy beings. The pure spirits in heaven are holy as God is holy, and just as God is just; they feel as God feels towards himself and all his holy and unholy creatures. As God loves holiness and hates sin, so they love holiness and hate sin; and as he is disposed to punish sin, so they are pleased to see him punish sin. It is altogether reasonable, therefore, to suppose that they are disposed to love him and praise him for giving sinners a just recompense of reward. They see him cast the wicked down to hell. For John heard the third angel, who was the executioner of divine vengeance, say, "If any man worship the beast and his image, the same

shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Who can suppose that the holy angels and spirits of just men made perfect can be spectators of such a scene without peculiar sensibility? They must be pleased or displeased with the divine conduct; they must approve or disapprove it. And of necessity, they must either praise or blaspheme God, while they see him express the indignation of his benevolent and holy heart towards the disobedient, impenitent and unbelieving. Those who believe, what the whole current of scripture gives us the fullest evidence to believe, that some of our sinful race will be finally and for ever cast off, cannot disbelieve that the heavenly world will approve of God's casting them off for ever, and sincerely praise him for all the displays of his amiable and awful justice in the eternal condemnation and punishment of the wicked. For if they do not praise God, they must blaspheme him, and deserve the very punishment which they condemn. No one can carry his thoughts to heaven, and believe that there will be any blasphemy there against him who sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb; but perpetual praise for the bright displays of divine justice, as well as divine grace. I proceed to show,

II. Why the heavenly hosts will for ever praise God for his for ever punishing the wicked, according to his threatenings in his word.

Here it may be proper to premise, that the holy and benevolent inhabitants of heaven do not praise God for punishing the wicked, because they take pleasure in their punishment, simply considered. The God of love himself can take no pleasure in punishing the wicked, simply considered; and he says so, under the solemnity of an oath. "As I live," saith the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." All the heavenly world possess the same benevolent spirit, which can take no pleasure in the pains and sufferings of the damned, simply considered; and therefore they do not praise God merely for the punishments he inflicts, but for the pure, perfect and holy justice, which he displays in punishing. Nor do they praise God for punishing the wicked, because they have no regard to the worth of their immortal souls, and the importance of their eternal happiness. They know that their souls are as capable of enjoying eternal happiness as their own, and that their eternal happiness is as valuable as their own, simply considered. And were

it consistent with the highest good of the universe, they would rejoice to see them converted, released from punishment, and admitted into heaven, in any future period of their existence. For they love to enjoy happiness themselves, and to see all their fellow creatures enjoy it to as great a degree, and to as long a duration, as the best good of the universe requires or admits. Some seem to think that if the heavenly inhabitants do praise God in the view of the miseries of the damned, they must necessarily feel and express perfect malevolence towards those sinful and miserable objects. But this idea ought to be discarded, because there is no foundation for it in scripture or reason. The way is now prepared to bring forward the plain and positive reasons, why the heavenly hosts do say, "Amen, Alleluia," while they behold the endless sufferings of the wicked.

1. The first and most obvious reason for their praising God for punishing the wicked for ever is, that they deserve to be punished for ever. There is an inseparable connection between sin and ill desert. Every sin deserves punishment and must for ever deserve it; because punishment has no tendency to take away its ill desert. Every transgressor of a human law, after he has suffered the penalty of it, still deserves to be punished, as much as he did before; because the punishment he has received has not either removed, or diminished his guilt, or desert of punishment. It is true, the good of the public does not require a transgressor of the law to receive a perpetual punishment, in many cases; and for that reason, the law does not require him to suffer a punishment as long as he lives; but in some cases it does require this, and justly too; because his sufferings do not remove, nor diminish his ill desert. And this holds true in respect to punishment in a future state. Whatever punishment God may inflict upon the finally impenitent at the last day, they will deserve to suffer as long as they exist. For they will deserve it at any future period of their existence, as much as they did at the moment God at first inflicted it upon them. It is as true that sinners deserve eternal punishment, as that they deserve any punishment at all. But it seems to be universally allowed by sinners themselves, that they actually deserve some punishment, and even more than they are willing to suffer. There can be no doubt but that the angels of light, and the spirits of just men made perfect, have a much clearer and juster view of the ill desert of sin than any of mankind in this present imperfect state. They have seen apostate angels, and apostate men, and some of them have been apostate creatures themselves. They have had great opportunity, and abundant occasion to examine the evil nature and ill desert of sin,

with the deepest sensibility and attention. They must all know that sin deserves not only some punishment, but endless punishment. And those who have been redeemed from the earth, know that they have felt and acknowledged that they have deserved, and still deserve eternal death. But if all these holy creatures know that sinners deserve eternal punishment, they must see that they have a good reason to praise God for inflicting upon them the punishment they deserve. They do not praise God without a motive, nor from a malevolent motive, but from supreme love to God and the general good of the universe, which is the highest and best motive they can act from. Vindictive justice flows from the pure, disinterested and universal benevolence of the Deity; and every expression of it in punishing the guilty, gives unequivocal evidence that he has a supreme regard to the highest good of all holy beings, and is willing to sacrifice the good of individual transgressors for the blessedness of his holy kingdom; which reflects the highest glory upon him. It must be the desire of all holy creatures, who see and condemn the ill desert of sinners, to desire that the punishment they deserve may be inflicted upon them. David prayed to God that he would treat sinners according to their ill desert. "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert." There is such an apparent congruity, or fitness, between the ill desert of sinners and the punishment which God inflicts upon them, that the heavenly hosts feel that they have reason to praise God for adapting and inflicting a punishment upon them perfectly correspondent to their desert. One reason is plain and obvious, why the heavenly hosts say, "Amen, Alleluia," in the view of the punishment God inflicts upon those who deserve it.

2. Not only the ill desert of sinners, but the moral beauty and excellence of vindictive justice, is another reason why the heavenly world praise God for the exercise of it. If vindictive justice were a blemish in the divine character, as many maintain, then there could be no reason why any of God's creatures should love or praise him for it. Many suppose that the pure and perfect benevolence of the Deity excludes vindictive justice from his moral character. They endeavor to make themselves and others believe that God is all mercy, and has not the least trait of vindictive justice in his nature. But this supposition is contrary to the nature of true benevolence, to the plainest declarations of scripture, and to the general course of divine providence, from the beginning of the world to the present day. How many persons, and how many nations, has God judicially destroyed? And how expressly has he declared that vindictive

justice belongs to his essential character? The apostle says, "We know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord." We know, as well as the apostle, where God hath said this. It is in the thirty-second of Deuteronomy, where we read, "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill and I make alive: I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." God has here drawn his true character, in which his vindictive justice is the most prominent trait. If there be any beauty in his moral character, there is a beauty in his vindictive justice, or holy and benevolent disposition to punish sin. And if this disposition be amiable, then the actual display of it must be equally amiable and glorious, in the view of all holy beings. The heavenly hosts, therefore, see a good reason, why they should admire and praise God, for giving a just recompense to those who have known and hated him without a cause.

3. The heavenly host have reason to praise God for his goodness, as well as justice, in maintaining his moral government over his moral subjects, by confining and punishing the irreconcilable enemies of it. It belongs to God not only to exercise a natural government over the natural world, but to exercise a moral government over the moral world. The proper mode of governing moral subjects, is by laws, rewards and punishments. It is in this way that mankind govern one another. They find it necessary to make laws and see that they are executed, in order to preserve peace and harmony, and to restrain the lawless and disobedient. And wise and just rulers have always been admired and applauded for supporting the government which they are appointed to administer. So God, the supreme ruler of the universe, is worthy of the admiration and praise of all his moral subjects, for supporting his wise and holy government over them, by the laws he gives, the rewards he promises, and the punishments he inflicts upon the lawless and disobedient. He has promoted the security, the order, and the happiness which have been enjoyed in heaven and earth, by his holy laws, his great rewards, and his awful judgments. We know that when his judgments have been abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world have often learned righteousness, and enjoyed peace and security in consequence of them. What a favor it is to heaven that God has banished the apostate angels from it, and confined them in chains of darkness? What a favor it is that God has banished

Pharaoh and the long succession of tyrants from the earth, and by his almighty and invisible hand has restrained them from ever returning to spread misery and destruction on earth, and from ever entering and disturbing the peace and harmony of heaven? And what a great favor it is that he restrains the malignant spirits of the regions of darkness from appearing, and wreaking their vengeance upon any of the living inhabitants of the world? We, as well as all heaven, have reason to praise God, that he displays his amiable goodness and justice in supporting his wise and holy and benevolent government over the whole universe, by separating, restraining and punishing his and our enemies. The heavenly hosts mention this reason for their singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. When they sing that song, they say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest." The heavenly inhabitants praise God for the displays of his goodness and justice in governing this world, as well as the world above. I may add,

4. The spirits of just men made perfect have a peculiar reason for their praising God for punishing the finally impenitent, because it eminently displays his sovereign grace towards them. They realize that they had deserved to be finally cast off and consigned to endless wo, as well as those whom they see doomed to everlasting darkness and despair; and that it is of the Lord's mercies, that they are not consumed, but admitted to see, admire and praise their divine Redeemer. The miseries of the damned will for ever be a mirror, in which the redeemed from the earth will see and feel and gratefully acknowledge the astonishing grace of God, in renewing, sanctifying and conducting them to heaven. How must Moses feel in seeing Pharaoh! How must Paul feel in seeing Pilate! How must parents feel in seeing children, and children in seeing parents, and friends in seeing friends, separated from them, and doomed to unutterable and unending misery! What gratitude must the happy ones feel, and how sincerely will they praise God for his sovereign and distinguishing mercy? John will tell us: "And I looked and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having their Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne and before the

four beasts and the elders; and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Will the heavenly hosts praise God for all the displays of his vindictive justice in the punishment of the damned; then we may learn that there is an essential difference between saints and sinners. Sinners often disbelieve and deny this distinction, and it is very difficult to make them see and believe it. They are extremely loath to be convinced, and argue, in their own apprehension, very plausibly against it. They are ready to allow that some men are worse than others, and some are better than others; and this they think they can easily account for, without supposing that any are totally destitute of goodness, and need to have an entirely new heart, in order to become the friends of God. But the Bible represents sinners as totally destitute of the love of God and spirit of Christ, and essentially different from those in whose hearts the love of God has been shed abroad. And this sinners very often undesignedly acknowledge. They sometimes freely say that they do not think that heaven is such a place as has been described; or that the inhabitants of it say, "Amen, Alleluia," while they see the smoke of the torments of the damned ascend up for ever and ever. They desire and hope to go to heaven, without ever being willing to speak such a language, or to express such feelings in the view of the damned. And is not this saying that their hearts are essentially different from those who feel such a spirit, and are willing to adopt the language of heaven? Good men do adopt the language of heaven before they arrive there. And all, who are conscious that they cannot say, "Amen, Alleluia," may know that they are yet sinners, and essentially different from saints; and altogether unprepared to go with them to heaven, and join with them in praising God, for the displays of his vindictive justice in dooming all unholy creatures to a never ending punishment. They must put away their carnal mind, renounce their selfish feelings, and exercise pure, disinterested, holy love, before they can become real saints and heirs of heaven.

2. If any sinners think they desire to go to heaven, it is a clear evidence that they are ignorant of heaven and of their own hearts. Sinners generally are ignorant of heaven, and view it as a mere asylum, or a place of refuge from the miseries of the damned, which they dread, and wish by all means to escape. If they might have their choice, they would greatly prefer living in this world always, and never go to heaven; but as they are

rationally convinced that they must, sooner or later, die and leave this world for ever, so they would rather go to heaven, and not be doomed to take up their final and eternal residence in the regions of darkness, and lie down in eternal sorrow. They feel as Balaam felt, and pray, if they do pray to God, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But Balaam afterwards recalled his wish; and so do sinners very often, after they have made the same prayer. How do young and old, in a time of sickness, or some other scene of trouble and distress, call upon God to show mercy and admit them into his family; but as soon as they recover from sickness, or escape from danger, cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God. But sinners, under the awakening and convincing influence of the divine Spirit, are more deeply impressed, and more anxiously concerned to escape the wrath to come; and they imagine they desire, above all things, to go to heaven, and fondly imagine that they are far more willing to be in heaven, than God is to admit them there. But all such persons are greatly mistaken. They have no just idea of heaven, nor of their own hearts. They are not under genuine convictions, and are grossly ignorant of the plague of their own hearts. They are not convinced that they deserve eternal destruction, nor are they willing that God should cast them off for ever; but their hearts rise in sensible opposition to God's amiable and awful vindictive justice and absolute sovereignty. Though they ardently wish to escape hell, yet they will not submit to God's absolute sovereignty to escape it. Though they should be admitted to heaven, their hearts would rise against God and all the heavenly hosts, who praise him for dooming the impenitent to the regions of darkness and despair. Instead of saying, "Amen, Alleluia," they would be speechless, and inwardly curse God and die. If God would give them the best place in heaven, and offer them the whole universe, to fall down and cordially join the heavenly hosts in praising him for punishing any creature eternally, they would reject the offer. They would wish to exchange heaven for any other place. Sinners under genuine convictions have often felt and said they had no desire to go to heaven with their present views and feelings. And so long as any sinner retains his carnal mind, which is enmity against God, he is grossly and dangerously ignorant of heaven and of his own heart, if he thinks he really desires to go to heaven for any other reason than to escape future and eternal punishment; which is a selfish and criminal desire, let it rise ever so high. Awakened sinners are extremely apt to imagine that their strong and ardent desires to go to heaven are really virtuous and acceptable to God. But they are only desirous that

God would submit to them, and sacrifice the good of the universe to deliver them from deserved punishment. The devil had as good a desire, when he said to Christ, "I beseech thee, torment me not." It is of infinite importance that sinners should have a knowledge of heaven, and of their own hearts.

3. If the place and business of heaven be such as they have been described, then sinners may see what is the real and sole difficulty in the way of their going to heaven. They generally plead that they have not power enough to go, though they wish, desire, seek and strive to go. This is their most common, and they think the most forcible plea, when they are driven to make any excuse. But it is totally groundless. The truth is, they are too strong, instead of being too weak. They are stout hearted. They cannot bear the spirit and business of heaven. They know enough to hate heaven and its holy and benevolent inhabitants. And they have strength to avoid walking in the strait and narrow path to heaven; and to walk and even run in the broad road to destruction. It is not true that they have no strength, but that they have no heart, to go to heaven. The way of transgressors is hard. They put forth more strength, more courage, more resolution and more zeal, in travelling the forbidden paths to ruin, than others do in running their Christian race to heaven. If they would seriously, critically and impartially examine the exercises of their own hearts, they would find that Christ has told them what is the real difficulty in the way of their obtaining salvation: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

4. It appears from what has been said, that it is as easy for any to comply with the terms of salvation, as it is to be in heaven, and cordially unite with the heavenly hosts in their enjoyments and employments. When any specify the difficulties they find in embracing the gospel, they mention the hard conditions upon which it offers salvation. They seem to think that they are much higher than they need to be, and such as they cannot perform. But let us examine these terms distinctly, and see whether any that have ever been proposed are more difficult to be complied with, than to be willing to be in heaven, if God would actually take them there. Is supreme love to God a term of salvation? But can any be willing to be in heaven, unless they love God supremely? All the heavenly hosts love God supremely for what he is in himself, perfectly holy, just and good. And none can desire to be united with a holy society, without being united with them in affection. Is love to the decrees of God a term of salvation? But can any desire to be in heaven, where the decrees of God are most visibly carried into effect, and most joyfully admired and adored, without

believing and loving the sovereignty of God in forming and executing his decrees? Do some say that love to a damning God is a term of salvation? But does not a sincere desire to be in heaven necessarily imply a desire to see and adore God in casting the wicked into hell? All the heavenly hosts see, admire and praise God for doing this. Do some say that a willingness to be damned is a term of salvation? But is it any more difficult for any one to be willing to be cast off for ever himself, than to be willing to see others cast off for ever, though he has been nearly and tenderly connected with some of them through life? The holy angels have been willing to see the apostate angels cast off for ever. The spirits of just men have been willing to see those, with whom they had been intimately connected, cast off for ever. The eleven apostles have been willing to see Judas cast off for ever; and no doubt but David has been willing to see Absalom, his darling son, cast off for ever. Now, if there be nothing more hard or difficult in complying with the terms of salvation than there is in being really willing to be in heaven, then none have the least reason to complain of them; for certainly they cannot complain that God requires them to be willing to be in heaven, in order to his actually admitting them to dwell with him and his holy subjects, in that holy and happy place. The truth is, there is nothing which God requires men to do in this life, in order to go to heaven, that is harder to be done, than to be willing to be in heaven. The difficulty lies not in going, but in being there. A sincere desire to be in heaven will certainly carry any person there. Let no man deceive and destroy himself, by complaining of external difficulties in the way of going to heaven, for they all lie within himself; and nothing but his inwardly saying to God, Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways, can shut him out of the kingdom of glory.

5. It appears from what has been said, that lowering the terms of salvation has no tendency to allure men to heaven. Let heaven be properly described, and let natural men really understand wherein its enjoyments and employments consist, and they would not be willing to comply with any terms that could be proposed, in order to obtain admission into it. Let external obedience, common honesty, or common decency, be substituted in the place of supreme love to God, a cordial approbation of his eternal purposes, and unconditional submission to his absolute sovereignty, and men be told that they need not believe and love such doctrines in order to be saved; they would no sooner comply with the lowest, than with the highest terms of salvation, in a clear view of heaven. The experiment of lowering the terms of salvation has often been made. But

what effect has it produced? The effect is well known. It has only made such as were ignorant of their own hearts, think that they desired to go to heaven, and were actually going there, while they possessed their natural heart, which is enmity against God, and totally unfitted them for heaven. This was the case in Christ's day; who told his disciples that except their righteousness exceeded the external righteousness which others had been taught to depend upon, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is extremely dangerous for those who preach the gospel, to lower down the terms of salvation so as to please the natural heart. It may allure some to perform the externals of religion, and to enjoy a hope of escaping the wrath to come; but such a false hope is extremely dangerous, and instead of bringing men nearer to the kingdom of heaven, pushes them the fartherest from it, and must be removed in order to embrace the gospel.

6. It appears from what has been said, that a clear, realizing view of heaven, would put every sinner in the world out of doubt in respect to his spiritual state. Sinners often complain of doubts, and say they are troubled with fears. But let them realize the enjoyments and employments of heaven, and their doubts would vanish, and they would sensibly know that the love of God and of heaven is not in them, and that they are totally unfit to be united with saints and angels in glorifying and enjoying God. They would know, that if the gate of heaven were opened to them they would not enter into it. Their selfish hearts would shut them out. How many of the most amiable sinners have been brought to such a knowledge of their hearts, and found by painful experience that their hearts, and nothing but their hearts, were the obstacles in the way of embracing the gospel, and enjoying the happiness of heaven, which it promises to all that love God. Sinners often live upon their doubts, as others do upon their hopes. According to God's usual dispensations of grace, he removes the doubts of sinners, by showing them their hearts; and he shows them their hearts by showing them his true character, and the nature of heavenly enjoyments and employments. Careless sinners, and merely awakened sinners, pay but little attention to the nature of salvation, which they think they really desire. But their desires after mere happiness are unholy and unacceptable to God; and they can never obtain holy happiness without holy desires after holiness. It becomes them to inquire what manner of spirit they are of, and what is the supreme object of their desires, whether holiness, or mere happiness. As soon as they justly determine this point, they will have no doubt that they are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity.

7. This subject teaches all real christians that they have no just ground to doubt of their good estate. They often see what they imagine are just causes of their doubting; but if they would critically and impartially examine their own hearts, they would find that in them which would remove their doubts. They would find supreme love to God, and sincere desires after holiness and the enjoyment of God on earth and in heaven. Such views and feelings all have, who have passed from death unto life, and turned from sin to holiness. And such views and desires are positive evidence that their hearts are right, notwithstanding all the contrary views and desires which they too often experience. Though Paul found great moral imperfections cleaving to him, yet he could confidently say, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." And Peter, after he had denied his Master and lamented his conduct with tears, could appeal to Christ and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Let christians carry their hearts to heaven, and there they will find an infallible standard by which they may safely determine that they are friends of God, and prepared to be with him, and with all the pure spirits in heaven, to see his glory and praise him for ever.

But after all, there may be a question in the minds of sinners which they wish to have answered. And though it has been often answered, yet they still desire to have it answered again: If it be so, that we have no desire to go to heaven because we have no desire to be there, what shall we do? The answer is short and plain: Renounce your enmity against God, which you have felt and expressed without a cause, and love him supremely. And then you may rely upon his promise: "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."

SERMON XV.

THE CONSISTENCY OF THE DIVINE CONDUCT, IN REWARDING OR PUNISHING CHILDREN ON THEIR PARENTS' ACCOUNT.

For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. — Exodus, xx. 5, 6.

This is the reason annexed to the second commandment, which runs in this form: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." The phrase *visiting iniquity* is often used in scripture, and always means punishing iniquity. God here threatens to punish disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents; and, on the other hand, he promises to bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents. This reason annexed to the second commandment, is probably much oftener read and repeated, than understood. It was designed to make a deep impression upon the minds of both parents and children. But it is not to be expected that it will make a deep impression upon the minds of any, who do not understand the meaning, the force, and propriety of it. I shall endeavor, therefore, in the present discourse, to explain it as clearly and

intelligibly as I can. And in order to this, it seems necessary to show,

I. That God does bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents;

II. That God does punish disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents; and,

III. That there is a consistency in this mode of conduct.

I. I am to show that God does bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents.

God promised Abraham that he would show mercy to his obedient children, for the sake of his obedience. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect — and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Abraham was faithful, in the first instance, to keep covenant with God in respect to his family. God says, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." After he had offered up his son Isaac on the altar, the Lord said again to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." For the sake of Abraham's obedience, God did actually bless thousands and thousands of his obedient children from generation to generation. God blessed the obedient children of David for his sake. After he had purposed to build the temple, and God had forbidden him to do it, he then promised to bless him, by blessing his children. He said to him, "When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt rest with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish thy kingdom. He shall build me an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." But though Solomon was not uniformly obedient like his father David, and for a time fell into idolatry, yet God told him he would not punish him so severely as he deserved, for his father David's sake. "Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant, and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Nevertheless, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake." Though Abijam's

heart "was not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of his father David; nevertheless, for David's sake, did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him." Again, though Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat greatly deviated from the path of duty, it is said, "Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah, for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children." God blessed the obedient children of Jonadab for the sake of the obedience of their father Jonadab. It is said of the merciful man, "his seed is blessed;" and of the just man, "his children are blessed after him." Thus it appears from scripture, that God does bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents, not only unto the third and fourth generation, but unto every generation of obedient parents and children.

II. I proceed to show that God does punish disobedient children for the sake of disobedient parents.

This is expressly asserted in the text. God solemnly declares that he does visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. This declaration means that God does punish children who hate him, for the sake of their fathers before them, who hated him; which is precisely the same thing as his punishing disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents. As it is only obedient children that God blesses for the sake of obedient parents, so it is only disobedient children that God punishes for the sake of disobedient parents. This will appear from a number of plain, undeniable facts recorded in scripture, as well as from some plain scripture declarations. God visited the iniquity of Ham, not upon himself, but upon his son Canaan and his posterity, for the long period of more than four thousand years. God punished the posterity of Baasha for the sake of their father's iniquity. "Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying, Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." God also visited the iniquity of Ahab, not upon himself, but upon his son. "The word of the Lord came to Elijah, the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house." These facts are perfectly agreeable

to the divine declarations on this subject. Job says, "He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail." Again, speaking of the wicked man, he says, "God layeth up his iniquity for his children; he rewardeth him, and he shall know it." David, speaking of one of the same character, says, "Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following, let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out." Christ taught the same doctrine that the prophets taught, concerning God's punishing a disobedient posterity for the sake of their disobedient progenitors. "Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." Here Christ foretells the cruelty and persecution which that generation should be guilty of, and then tells them that they should be severely and signally punished, for the sake of their cruel and persecuting forefathers. The meaning is, that, because God delayed to punish their fathers according to their desert, he would more certainly and severely punish *them* according to their desert. Having proved from scripture that God does bless obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents, and does punish disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents, it remains to show,

III. The consistency of this mode of the divine conduct, towards obedient and disobedient parents and children.

It must be granted that this is a subject rather difficult to understand and explain; but, if it be consistent, its consistency may be explained and understood. And, in order to make it appear consistent and plain, I would observe, that it does not imply that God punishes innocent parents for the sins of their guilty children; nor that he punishes innocent children for the sins of their guilty parents. This would be wrong in its own nature, and contrary to an express command which he had given to his people Israel. "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin." When God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, he does not punish the innocent instead of the guilty which would be contrary to immutable justice, and to the plain prohibition of his own law. He says he visits the iniquity of

the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. He threatens to visit the iniquity of the fathers, not upon their innocent children, but upon their children who hate him, and who deserve to be punished for their hating him. Sinful children deserve to be punished for their own sins, and God punishes them for their own sins; and the reason he gives for it is, the iniquity of their fathers. Their fathers deserve to be punished for their own iniquity; but God, as the moral governor of the world, sees fit, in some cases, to pass over the iniquity of fathers, and to punish their children for their own iniquity. When both parents and children are sinful God may punish both, or he may punish the parents and not the children, or the children and not the parents. And this is what he threatens in the reason annexed to the second commandment. He will visit the iniquity of the fathers, not upon themselves, but upon their children who hate him. This is not punishing innocent children instead of their guilty parents; but only punishing guilty children for their own sins, instead of punishing guilty parents for their own sins. This is neither an act of justice, nor injustice; but only an act of sovereignty. God has a right to act as a sovereign, in either punishing or not punishing mankind for their sins in this world. He may suffer some ungodly parents to prosper all their days in their iniquity, but not suffer their ungodly children to prosper all their days in their iniquity. He may deny prosperity to some godly parents all their days, but bless their godly children with signal prosperity. This is a state of probation, and not of retribution. Though God never punishes any in this world who do not deserve to be punished, nor blesses any in this world who do not deserve the tokens of his approbation; yet he does not bestow signal favors upon all who are worthy of the tokens of his peculiar favor, nor punish all who deserve the peculiar tokens of his displeasure. He is not obliged to punish, or reward, any of mankind, according to their deserts, in this world. He delayed, for many years, to punish the Amorites, because their iniquity was not full. He delayed to punish the iniquity of the Egyptians for many years, because their iniquity was not full, until they disregarded the severe judgments sent upon them by the hand of Moses. He delayed to punish the iniquity of his own peculiar people, until they had filled up the measure of their guilt, by crucifying his dearly beloved Son; and then he sunk their city and their nation in universal ruin. And thus he delays to punish wicked parents, until their more wicked children have filled up the measure of their iniquity; and then he punishes them according to their own desert. This God tells us, in the reason annexed to his second commandment, is

the mode of his moral government in this world; and where is the injustice or inconsistency of it? He does not punish any innocent persons, nor any guilty persons, for any sins but their own. But the truth is, mankind have always been disposed to misunderstand, and to misrepresent the conduct of God, in blessing obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents, and in punishing disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents; which has led them to complain of the wise and holy dispensations of divine providence. Let us now, therefore, hear what God has to say upon this subject, to explain and justify the rectitude and consistency of his own conduct. If we turn to the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, we shall find God fairly discussing and settling this important controversy with his people. Though they had often read the reason annexed to the second commandment, yet they were disposed to misunderstand and misrepresent it. God was now treating them according to his declaration in the second commandment; for he was visiting the iniquities of their fathers upon them, by causing them to pine away in their own iniquities under his chastising hand. Had it not been for the iniquities of their fathers for a long series of years, he would not have punished them by a seventy years' captivity in Babylon for their own sins. But they insinuated that God was punishing them for their fathers' sins, and not for their own; which they complained of as unequal and inconsistent. God allows that it would be unjust to punish them for their fathers' sins instead of their own, but at the same time denies that he had ever done so, or ever would do so. God demands: "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: The soul that sinneth, it shall die." This God says is right, and proceeds to illustrate it, by several examples. "If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God." This is the case of a father. He next puts the case of a son. "If this just man beget a son, that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and doeth the like to any one of these things, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him." He proceeds to put another case. "Now lo, if he"—this wicked son—"beget a son that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live." Having prepared the way for it, God now meets and refutes their great objection against his conduct.

"Yet ye say, Why?" doth not the son in fact bear the iniquity of the father? Are you not now visiting the iniquity of our fathers upon us their children, and actually punishing us for our fathers' sins, and not for our own? This God absolutely denies. "When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." God illustrates this truth by different cases, and declares that if a righteous man should turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, he should die in his iniquity; or if a wicked man should turn from his wickedness and become righteous, he should live. Still God supposes that the objectors are not satisfied. "Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?" After making this appeal to their own consciences, he assures them that he would in time to come, as he had done in time past, reward, or punish them, according to their own personal conduct. "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." God here completely refutes the objection which his people made against the rectitude and consistency of his conduct towards them, by showing that he never had punished, and never would punish parents for the sins of their children, nor children for the sins of their parents, as they had supposed and represented. But he does not pretend to say that he had not visited the iniquity of their fathers upon them, according to the reason he had annexed to his second commandment. For he had actually done it. The long series of their fathers' iniquities was the occasion of his sending them into their long captivity in Babylon. He delayed to punish the nation according to their deserts for a long course of years, until they were ripe for a dreadful national calamity; and then he inflicted that national calamity upon their children, who deserved it for their own sins. The iniquity of their fathers was the occasion, not the cause of their being punished; just as the sins of those who killed the prophets, were the occasion, and not the cause, of the blood of all the prophets being required of that generation who crucified the Lord of glory. God having delayed to punish persecutors, it was then time to punish persecutors according to their deserts. When God blesses obedient children for the sake of their obedient parents, he rewards the children for following the good

example of their parents; and when he punishes disobedient children for the sake of their disobedient parents, he punishes them for their own sin in following the wicked example of their parents. In the first case, he does not reward parents for their own obedience, but rewards the children for their own obedience; which is agreeable to the reason annexed to the fifth commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The reason annexed is, a promise of long life and prosperity. This is exactly similar to the promise annexed to the second commandment, "Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." God was under no obligation to make these promises to obedient children; nor to threaten to punish disobedient children in this life. But he had a right to make both the promise and threatening, as a holy and righteous Sovereign, to answer wise and important purposes. And he has a right to treat obedient children according to his promise, and disobedient children according to his threatening. This is perfectly agreeable to his justice and goodness, and not in the least inconsistent with the law of nature, or his own written law: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children; neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since God has promised to bless the obedient children of obedient parents, and threatened to punish the disobedient children of disobedient parents, we may be assured that he will faithfully fulfil the promise and the threatening, according to their true import and extent. It appears from scripture and universal observation, that obedient parents sometimes have disobedient, as well as obedient children; and that disobedient parents sometimes have obedient, as well as disobedient children; and that neither obedient children are always blessed, nor disobedient children are always punished. Though Abraham was an obedient parent, and commanded his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, yet it is probable that he had disobedient, as well as obedient children. Isaac was an obedient son, but it does not appear that all his other sons were so. David had both obedient and disobedient children, and this was true of other pious kings. And on the other hand, Ahaz was one of the worst of parents, and of kings; but yet his son Hezekiah was a most excellent person and prince. Nor does it appear that the good children of good parents have always been blessed, nor that the bad children of bad parents have always been punished. Now these things seem to be

inconsistent with the promise and threatening in the text. It seems as though God does not fulfil either his promise or his threatening, in respect to obedient and disobedient children. But this, however, must not be admitted. There must be some way to remove the difficulty. And it will immediately vanish, if we only consider that both the promise and threatening are general and indefinite. God does not promise any particular parent that he shall have obedient children; or, if his children are obedient, that he will bless each of them in particular; or, if he blesses each of them, that he will bestow the same blessings upon each. And, on the other hand, he does not threaten any particular parent that he shall have disobedient children; or, if he have disobedient children, that he will punish them all; or, if he punishes all, that he will punish them all alike. Nor does God specify in his promise and threatening, *when* he will bless obedient, and punish disobedient children. He has reserved all these particulars in his own power, retaining his right to act as an absolute Sovereign. Both his promise and threatening are to be construed and understood, in a general and indefinite sense; like many other general and indefinite promises and threatenings we find in his word. We read, "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread." We read, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." We read, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." We read, "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." These we know are general and indefinite promises and threatenings, which God acts as a sovereign in fulfilling. He fulfils them at one time, and not at another; and in respect to some persons, and not in respect to others. Just so the promise and threatening in the text are general and indefinite; and God acts as a sovereign in fulfilling them. I know some have considered them as particular and definite, and adduced them as proof of the opinion that, if parents are faithful in dedicating and educating their children, they shall certainly be pious. But this appears, from universal observation, to be a groundless opinion. It is generally true that pious parents oftener have pious children than wicked parents do, and wicked parents more rarely have pious children than pious parents. But both pious and wicked parents sometimes have wicked children. God has not promised any particular spiritual or temporal blessings to pious parents, or to pious children; nor threatened any particular spiritual or temporal evils to wicked parents, or to wicked children. We have a right to conclude that God always fulfils the promise and the threatening in the text, according to their general and indefinite meaning; and not to conclude that he fulfils

them in any other sense. And in this sense, we find by observation and experience, that he often does visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children that hate him, from generation to generation; and that he does show mercy to thousands of children who love him, and keep his commandments. And thus he blesses obedient children for the sake of their pious parents, and punishes disobedient children for the sake of their wicked parents.

2. It appears from what has been said upon this subject, that God is highly pleased with pious parents who faithfully discharge their duty towards their children. He generally and indefinitely promises to show mercy to their children for their sake, so far as is consistent with his perfect wisdom and goodness in governing the world; which is a peculiar mark of his approbation of their fidelity. He knows how near and dear their children are to them, and what pure and high satisfaction they take in the piety and prosperity of their offspring. They view any good bestowed upon them, as bestowed upon themselves. They have no greater joy than to see their children both pious and prosperous, walking in the truth. It was a great satisfaction to Abraham, to see his son Isaac made pious and prosperous, for the sake of his parental fidelity. It was a great satisfaction to David that God gave his son Solomon a wise and understanding heart, and crowned him with power, riches and glory for his sake. When one man bestows favor upon another for the sake of a third person, it is a peculiar and delicate expression of his love and respect of that person, for whose sake he bestows the favor. It was a strong and delicate expression of David's love and friendship to Jonathan, when he showed kindness to Mephibosheth, for Jonathan his father's sake. So God's showing kindness to the children of pious parents for their parental faithfulness, is a peculiar and high expression of his approbation of their conduct in training them up in the way they should go; especially, if God bestows great spiritual, as well as temporal favors upon them. There is great reason to think that, according to his general and indefinite promise, he often does bestow the greatest and richest blessings upon children, for their pious parents' sake. In a great many instances, he undoubtedly grants their children the renewing and sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit, and prepares them for great prosperity and usefulness in the world. There are a vast many ways in which God can show favor to children for their parents' sake, and by which he manifests his peculiar approbation of parental faithfulness.

3. It appears from what has been said, that God is highly displeased with those parents who are unfaithful in respect to their

duty to their children. He generally and indefinitely threatens to punish their disobedient children unto the third and fourth generation, which is as long as parents ever live to see their children, and the evils they suffer in this life. His threatening to unfaithful parents seems to be more definite than his promise to faithful parents. He threatens to visit the iniquity of unfaithful parents upon their children who hate him, unto the third and fourth generation; which seems to imply that their children shall hate him unto the third and fourth generation. That is, he will bring spiritual, as well as natural evils upon them, for so long a period. He will withhold from them his special grace, as well as his special temporal blessings. Unholy parents have as strong natural affection for their children, as pious parents have for theirs. It gives them peculiar pain and anxiety to see their children pursuing such evil courses as lead to poverty and reproach in this world, and to eternal misery in the next. The sufferings of their children are often as affecting to them as their own sufferings, and sometimes much harder to bear. This all men know; and upon this ground, the enemies of parents often revenge upon them by punishing their children. The king of Babylon "slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes." This he did to torture the feelings of their father. God says he will punish the children of unfaithful parents before their eyes, to strike daggers in their hearts for their unfaithfulness. God still visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. He suffers them to walk in the way of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes, and to prepare themselves for both temporal and eternal ruin; which wrings the hearts of unfaithful parents with the keenest sorrow and self reproach.

4. God appears infinitely wise in treating children according to the mode he has established in the second commandment. To bless children for their fathers' sake, and to punish them for their fathers' sake, is directly suited to touch parents in their tenderest part. When God addresses their understandings, or consciences, they are extremely apt to disregard his voice; but when he speaks to their hearts, they can hardly help feeling what he says. When he tells them how kindly and mercifully he will treat their children, if they will only conduct towards them as they ought to conduct towards them, it is calculated to awaken all their tender feelings towards the objects that lie nearest to their hearts. And he has plainly told them how they ought to conduct towards them. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command you this day shall

be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." This is as much as to say to parents, "Only give your children this religious instruction from supreme love to me, and I will show them mercy and grant them every temporal and spiritual good, which infinite wisdom and goodness shall see fit to bestow. And can you desire that I should treat them in a better manner? I lodge the holiness and happiness of your children in your own hands and hearts. It depends upon your fidelity, whether you shall see your children holy and happy, in this world and the next." Can parents reasonably desire any greater encouragement to give up their children to God, to give them a religious education, to set before them an amiable example of piety, and to carry them to God, and pray, "O that our children may live before thee?" On the other hand, what could God say more directly suited to prevent parents from being unfaithful to their children, than to tell them that, if they are unfaithful, he will visit their iniquity of unfaithfulness upon their children and children's children, unto the third and fourth generation? How can they bear to see the fatal consequences of their unfaithfulness in the sin and misery of their children? If any motives can deter parents from neglecting their duty towards their children, it would seem that the motive which God sets before them in the second commandment, must have this happy effect. In a word, we cannot conceive that God could have established a wiser or better mode of conduct, than his blessing and punishing children for their father's sake. It is suited to promote virtue and restrain vice in both parents and children, from generation to generation, to the end of time.

5. It appears from what has been said, that children have great reason to be thankful for pious and faithful parents. All children have derived, or might have derived great spiritual and temporal benefit from the faithfulness of their parents; and all pious children are thankful to God for parental faithfulness. They are thankful that they were given up to God in sincerity, that they were instructed, advised, admonished and restrained by their pious parents. They are thankful for their example and prayers, and for all that they have done to draw down divine blessings upon them in time and eternity. Moses was thankful that God was not only his God, but his father's God. "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." But whether children are gracious or graceless, obedient or disobedient, they ought

to be thankful for the fidelity of their pious parents. Their ingratitude and disobedience, under faithful parental instruction, are extremely sinful and displeasing to God. They abuse one of the most rare and distinguishing privileges. But few children enjoy such precious privileges, because there are but few faithful parents. It is one of the most ominous marks of deep depravity in children and youth, to despise and abuse pious parental instruction; and it is generally followed by a very vicious and abandoned life. Those who break over a pious and religious education, generally break over all other restraints and become prodigies in wickedness. But were children and youth ever more disposed to despise and abuse pious parental instruction, than at this day? Where is pious parental instruction and faithfulness more despised and abused, than in this place? Is there scarcely a pious child or youth to be found, even in religious families; or any in irreligious families? What is to be expected, if God does not visit the iniquity of fathers upon themselves? Will he not visit their iniquities upon their children, unto the third and fourth generation?

6. From this subject, we learn the solemn importance of parents being religious. They are expressly required to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They are bound by the supreme authority of their Creator and Lawgiver, to give their children a pious and religious education. But are graceless parents prepared to give their children such an education? While they neglect to give up themselves to God, will they not neglect to give up their children to God? While they neglect to give their supreme affection to God, will they not neglect to teach their children to remember and love their Creator supremely? While they neglect to obey God's commands, will they not neglect to command their children and households to keep the way of the Lord and obey his commands? While they neglect to pray for themselves, will they not neglect to pray for their children? Just so long as parents remain destitute of grace, they will remain morally incapable of giving their children a pious and religious education; and suffer them to walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes, in the broad path to endless ruin. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. The indulgence of unholy parents to their children is extremely cruel; for it exposes them to sin and misery in this world, and in the world to come. And can it afford them consolation to expect that God will spare them, and visit their iniquities upon their children, whom they love as their own souls? Can they bear to see their children sinking in sin and wretchedness? But how can they prevent these dire evils? God tells them how. He requires them to

love him with all their heart, and with all their mind, and with all their strength, and to teach their children to keep his commands; and he will show mercy to thousands of such dutiful and obedient children. To how many parents does this subject apply! How many are there that have not given their hearts, their names, their children, and their lives to God! How ungratefully are they treating God! How unkindly are they treating their children! And how unwisely are they treating themselves! Will not God visit them for their negligence? Or, if he does not visit them, will he not visit their children, and their children's children?

Finally, uninstructed, unadvised, undedicated and unrestrained children and youth are to be pitied. They know not what they do, while they pursue vanity, and indulge the corruptions of their hearts. They are ringleaders in every sinful and soul destroying practice. If they are condemned and reproved, they have able defenders—their unfaithful parents. They are out of the reach of all who wish and endeavor to instruct and reform them. But while they are to be pitied, how justly are those children and youth to be condemned, who follow their example, instead of following the instructions and admonitions and examples of their own pious parents!

SERMON XVI.

HERESIES.

For there must be also heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you. — 1 Corinthians, xi. 19.

Though the church of Corinth came behind no other church in respect to the variety and richness of spiritual gifts, yet they were unhappily divided in their religious sentiments, which produced unchristian animosities and contentions which the apostle entreats them to lay aside. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." Among other erroneous opinions and practices, he mentions in the chapter that contains the text, their unworthy views and unchristian conduct respecting the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He says, "Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Here the apostle first mentions divisions, and then also heresies; which plainly implies that heresies are distinct and different from divisions. Though divisions in a church may flow from heresies, yet they may flow from other causes. Both divisions and heresies have been in the Christian church from the beginning, and the text intimates that they must still be in the church. This, then, is the truth which now lies before us:

That it is necessary that there should be heresies in the church of Christ. I shall,

I. Explain heresies;

II. Show that they have been hitherto in the church of Christ;

III. Show in what sense it is necessary that they should be in the church of Christ; and,

IV. Show why they are necessary in the Christian church.

I. Let us consider what heresy is. There are but two different opinions upon this subject. One is, that it means a schism in a church, or a bitter contention, which brings about an unhappy and unchristian separation. But the apostle in the text and in the verse before it, makes a distinction between divisions or separations, and heresies. After mentioning divisions, he adds, "There must be also heresies." By heresies, all denominations of christians mean such great errors and false doctrines, as they consider contrary to, and subversive of what they call the essential or fundamental doctrines of the gospel. The apostle, in his epistle to Titus, represents a heretic as a man who maintains and propagates corrupt and dangerous doctrines; and not as one who is only contentious, and causes animosities and disputes in a church. "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." A heretic avows his false and corrupt sentiments, so that the church have no occasion to prove that he is a heretic, but only to censure him for his heresy; he having condemned himself by openly acknowledging and propagating his errors. The apostle gives the same description of heretics in his epistle to the church of Galatia. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, *and would pervert the gospel of Christ.* But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." That is, let him be anathematized, or excommunicated for his heresy. As there are various essential and fundamental errors which would pervert the gospel of Christ, so all these errors are so many heresies in a scripture sense. Though every error is not a heresy, yet every error which subverts the gospel is a heresy. Heresy essentially consists in any religious errors which are inconsistent with, and subversive of any of the first principles of the oracles of God; and heretics are those who openly avow and propagate such false and dangerous doctrines. I proceed to show,

II. That heresies have been in the christian church from the

beginning. Though the church of Christ was planted by his apostles, who admitted none into it but those who professed to believe and love the gospel sincerely; yet very soon error and heresy made their appearance among the professors of Christianity. Immediately after the gospel was preached by Philip in Samaria, Simon the sorcerer professed to believe and embrace it; but he soon became an open enemy to Christianity, and propagated the grossest heresies. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, intimates that there were heretics in that church, and warns them to guard against their heretical opinions. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." These persons were deceivers, which is the proper character of heretics, who are actuated by the spirit of the great deceiver. Our text assures us that there were heresies in the church of Corinth. Paul admonishes the church of Ephesus "not to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." This implies that there were heretics, who propagated heresies among the Ephesian church, and used every artifice to deceive and destroy. To the Philippians the apostle says, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers." These were false teachers and dangerous heretics. The apostle says to the Colossians, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of man, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This was an admonition against heretics and heresy, to which the Colossians were exposed. The apostle instructs Timothy to charge some that they preach no other doctrine than he had preached. And he assures him that "the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." He concludes his epistle by saying, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith." In his second epistle to Timothy he says, "Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom are Hymeneus and Phile-

tus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some." The apostle Peter says, "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." And the apostle John mentions various dangerous and destructive delusions and heresies in the seven churches of Asia in his day. If we now consult ecclesiastical history from the apostolic times to the present, we shall find that the Christian church has never been free from gross delusions and destructive heresies. Christ predicted that there would always be tares among the wheat to the end of the world. This prediction has been constantly fulfilling, and will be finally and completely fulfilled. There never has been, and never will be a pure church in this world. There must be heresies in it. This leads us to show,

III. In what sense it is necessary that heresies should be in the church. There never has been, and there never can be, any *natural* necessity of heresy in the Christian church. Those who enjoy the gospel may always know, and love, and profess the truth. They are at perfect liberty to embrace the truth, or to embrace error. They are never under any natural necessity of falling into any kind of heresy. Heresy is always the fruit of an evil heart of unbelief. If the Christian church had always followed the instructions and admonitions of Christ and the apostles, they never would have fallen into any essential errors or heresies, but would have remained pure and uncorrupt to this day. And if christians from this day forward would only regulate their sentiments by the rules of the gospel, they would never imbibe any fatal heresies to the end of the world. There is, therefore, only a *moral* necessity of the continuance of heresy; a necessity arising from the moral corruption of the heart. As long as there are any among professing christians who are under the dominion of a totally corrupt heart, they will love error better than truth, and will be disposed to imbibe fatal errors and heresies. And, as we have good reasons to expect that there will be some such persons in the church who will remain totally depraved, so we may believe that there will be in time to come, as in time past, heresies in the Christian church. Moral corruption will create a moral necessity of the perpetual continuance of heresy, as long as the world stands. It still remains to show,

IV. Why there is a moral necessity of heresies continuing in the Christian church to the end of time; or why God chooses, all things considered, that heresies should continue to exist.

God does not love, but hates heresies, in themselves considered. He forbids and condemns men for embracing them. But yet he chooses, all things considered, that they should exist. This Christ taught by the parable of the tares. The householder would not allow his servants to go and gather up the tares; but said, "Nay, lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest." God has some wise and important purposes to answer, by always continuing heresies in the church. This is intimated in the text. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you." Though we do not know all the good purposes which God intends to answer by the continuance of heresies in the church, yet some of the most plain and obvious ones it may be proper to mention.

1. One important purpose he means to answer by the means of heresies, is to distinguish truth from error. The leading and essential truths of the gospel have been revealed and taught ever since the first apostacy. The gospel was summarily preached to Adam, in the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. The gospel was preached to the patriarchs, who all lived and died in the faith of it. The gospel was preached to Abraham, and to all his seed under the Old Testament. And it has been still more fully and plainly preached by Christ and his apostles, and their successors from his day to this time. The great and essential truths of the gospel have been a stream of light, which, like the rising sun, has been continually shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day; while, at the same time, fatal errors, delusions and heresies have been increasing in number and magnitude, and involving all persons, and all nations destitute of the gospel, in worse than Egyptian darkness. God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions. The great mass of mankind have, for near six thousand years, been employing all their ingenuity and learning in devising and propagating new and false schemes of religion, by which they have involved the world in general, in the grossest errors and moral darkness. The light of divine truth has always shone in the midst of the darkness of human error. And we all know that darkness renders light more visible, and light renders darkness more visible. Just so, the darkness of error renders the light of truth more visible, and the light of truth renders the darkness of error more visible. The world that lies in moral darkness do not know that they lie in moral darkness, until the light of the glorious gospel shines among them. And those who have always enjoyed the light of the gospel, would not know that the rest of

the world are involved in gross and fatal moral darkness, did not the light of the gospel discover their deluded and perishing condition. Here then we see one important reason, why God has not caused the gospel to spread more extensively in the world, from the beginning to this day; and has left almost all nations to walk in their own way, and plunge themselves deeper and deeper in destructive errors and delusions. He has meant to set truth and error in contrast, and make them serve to illustrate each other. And this contrast has been producing this effect from age to age, and will continue to produce it to the end of time. Truth and error under the Old Testament dispensation illustrated each other; and truth and error under the New Testament illustrate each other. And orthodoxy in the church illustrates heterodoxy in the church, and heterodoxy in the church illustrates orthodoxy in the church. The errors in the heathen world illustrate the truths believed and professed in the Christian world. The errors in the Romish church illustrate the truths believed and professed in the Protestant church. And the errors in the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, or any other particular church, illustrate the truths believed and professed in that particular church. Sabellianism, Arianism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism, all illustrate the truth of Trinitarianism. Arminianism illustrates the truth of Calvinism. Every error that opposes any essential doctrine of the gospel, illustrates that essential doctrine of the gospel which it opposes. It is now easy to see, why God should choose that errors, delusions and heresies should always be not only in the world, but in the church. He always has employed, and will continue to employ them, as means to distinguish truth from error, and to cause error to appear more criminal and dangerous, and truth more amiable and important.

2. God chooses that there should be heresies in the church, that true believers may be distinguished from false professors. This the apostle gives as a reason why there must be heresies in the church. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." We know that there were true and false professors in the church of Corinth. The true professors believed, and loved, and professed, the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel which Paul preached and inculcated; but the false professors, who were carnal, and had itching ears, followed false teachers, and heartily embraced and propagated gross and fatal errors. The apostle asks, in the fifteenth chapter of this epistle, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is

Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Such a great and fatal heresy as the denial of the resurrection of the dead, had sprung up in the great and flourishing church of Corinth, which Paul had planted and Apollos had watered. And it was necessary that this heresy should be in that church, that those who were approved might be made manifest among them. It was certainly calculated to produce this good effect. There can be no doubt but that the sincere and approved professors disbelieved and rejected this heresy, while the insincere believed and propagated it, to their own ruin and the ruin of others. Heresy has always had the same tendency to distinguish true believers from false professors. It had this effect in the Jewish church. In the days of Rehoboam, it distinguished the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin from the ten tribes of Israel, who embraced the fatal errors of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. It had this effect till the coming of Christ, when it distinguished the Scribes and Pharisees from the few Israelites indeed. It had this effect in all the primitive churches, and distinguished true believers from Sabellians, Arians, Pelagians and other heretics. Heresy still serves to distinguish true believers from false professors in the Christian church in every part of the world. God has chosen that the present flood of errors, delusions and heresies should spread and prevail in the heathen and Christian world, that true churches might be made manifest, and the true professors in them be distinguished from false professors, who imbibe and propagate great and fatal heresies. The heterodox every where are a foil to the orthodox, and exhibit their characters in a beautiful and amiable light. Unitarians are a foil to Trinitarians, and Arminians are a foil to Calvinists. They are now distinguishing true professors from the false professors who are following the great and dangerous errors that they are so zealously propagating. And if they succeed in their proselyting scheme, there will soon be a wide and visible distinction between heterodox and orthodox churches in this land, and as visible a distinction between true and false professors. God is evidently making manifest those whom he approves, and those whom he disapproves, by the prevailing errors and heresies of the day. Professors of religion in all our churches are rapidly taking sides with the orthodox and heterodox, by which they will necessarily, though not per-

haps intentionally, discover the sincerity and insincerity of their hearts; which is a desirable discovery. I must farther observe,

3. That God chooses that errors, delusions, and heresies should be in the world and in the Christian church, that mankind may have a fair opportunity of choosing the way to life, or the way to death. Truth is the way to life, and error is the way to death. It is through the medium of truth that God prepares men for salvation, and it is through the medium of error that he prepares men for destruction. Accordingly, it has always been his method to exhibit both truth and error before their minds, and give them opportunity of choosing the one or the other, that they may be saved, or that they may be damned. He gave a fair opportunity to the first generations of mankind, to hear and embrace the preaching of Enoch, or to follow their own delusions. He gave a fair opportunity to the Israelites, when they first entered into Canaan, to embrace the laws of Moses or to embrace the fatal errors of the ignorant and benighted heathens. Hear the proposal that Joshua made to them. "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose lands ye dwell; but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." The same opportunity of choosing truth or error, life or death, God has given to all to whom he has sent the gospel. And all under the light of the gospel, have now a fair opportunity to embrace truth, or error; that is, to believe and love the great and essential doctrines of the gospel, or to believe and love destructive delusions and fatal heresies. Those who believe and cordially embrace the gospel, believe and love the great truths which make them wise unto salvation. But to those who disbelieve and reject the great and essential doctrines of the gospel, God sends a strong delusion, that they may believe a lie that they may be damned. For this great, glorious and awful purpose of saving and destroying the souls of men, God chooses that there should be fatal errors and heresies in the world and in the church. God compels no man to embrace truth, and no man to embrace error. He gives every one opportunity to embrace the one, or the other. This places mankind, in this world of error, in a most important and critical situation. They have life and death set before them, and they are commanded to choose life, and the way that leads to it. If it

be important that truth and error should be distinguished, or that true believers should be distinguished from false professors, or that mankind should have a fair opportunity of choosing the way of life rather than the way of death, then God has great and good reasons for choosing that there should be strong delusions and fatal heresies in the church and in the world, from age to age.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If heresies consist in those errors which are opposite to, and subversive of, the great and essential doctrines of the gospel; then we have reason to think that they have had a long and extensive spread in the world. Ever since the gospel was first preached to mankind, the great majority of the human race who have had an opportunity to hear the great and essential truths contained in it, have been disposed to reject it, and have sought out many other ways of salvation. Though the seed of Abraham were numerous as the stars of heaven; yet amidst the greatest light they enjoyed, they were perpetually apostatizing from God, and falling into the grossest idolatries and delusions of the heathen nations. Though Christ has afforded the best means of instruction and edification to his churches, yet there have always been great and destructive heresies among them. Indeed, there have been as great errors and delusions among professed christians, as among heathens. And, considering the religious privileges and advantages which nominal christians have enjoyed, they have discovered a greater love to error, and a greater stupidity in embracing gross and fatal heresies, than the most ignorant and stupid heathens have done. The god of this world has reigned universally and triumphantly among all the heathen nations, and has seduced them into the most absurd and fatal heresies and delusions. And he has been very successful in blinding the minds and corrupting the hearts of nominal christians, and in leading them to reject the plainest and most important truths of the gospel. Heresy, which consists in fundamental and fatal errors, has done more than any other secondary cause whatever to destroy the souls of men. Heresy has blinded the minds of more than half of mankind, respecting the being, perfections, designs and government of God. Heresy has blinded the minds of the great majority of those who have lived under the gospel, respecting their own sinful and perishing condition, and the way of salvation through the atonement of Christ and the special operations of the Holy Spirit. The way of the world is still as darkness; they know not at what they stumble. They are stupidly and insensibly pursuing the path that leads to darkness, disappoint-

ment, and everlasting despair. Though light shines, yet it shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. For wise and holy reasons, God has chosen that the great deceiver should lead all the heathen world into idolatry, and a great part of the Christian world into heresy, and cause darkness to cover the earth, and thick darkness the people.

2. It appears from the nature and tendency of heresy, that a church composed of real christians ought to censure and reject any of their members who embrace it. Many suppose that a church have no right to censure and excommunicate professors of religion for mere heresy. They say that every one has the right of private judgment, and does not stand amenable for any religious sentiments which he chooses to adopt to any human tribunal. They say that no church can distinguish error from truth, and consequently cannot determine whether any man is a heretic or not. But these are groundless objections against censuring and condemning men for heresy. Heresy has been explained to consist in essential errors. And it is as easy to determine what essential errors are, as to determine what essential truths are. Any error is essential error, that opposes or denies an essential truth; so that there may be as many essential errors as there are essential doctrines of the gospel. And if a Christian church can determine what are essential doctrines of the gospel, then they can determine what heresy is, which consists in the denial of the essential doctrines of the gospel. And though every member of a church has the right of private judgment, yet he has no right to judge wrong, and embrace errors which would pervert and destroy the gospel. Heresy is as plain and sure an index of a man's character as immorality. As immorality flows from a corrupt heart, so does heresy. Let a catalogue of essential truths be presented to one member of a church, and a catalogue of essential errors be presented to another member of the church; and, if the first embraces the catalogue of truths presented to him, and the second embraces the catalogue of errors presented to him, the church would then have as just ground to judge that he who embraced the catalogue of errors was an enemy to Christ and the gospel, as to judge that he who embraced the catalogue of truths was a friend to Christ and the gospel. It is with the heart that a man believes and loves the gospel, and it is with the heart that a man disbelieves and rejects the gospel. He that professes to believe and love the essential doctrines of the gospel, is a visible christian; and he that professes to disbelieve and hate the essential doctrines of the gospel, is a visible heretic; and such a visible heretic is a visible enemy to all righteousness, whom the church ought to censure, and exclude

from their Christian fellowship and communion. Hence says the apostle, "An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." Not only the nature, but the tendency of heresy, shows that heretics ought to be shut out of a Christian church. For they are not only unworthy, but corrupt members, who are disposed to corrupt and destroy the church. And in reference to such persons the apostle says, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." A church cannot discharge their duty to Christ, nor to themselves, nor to heretics, unless they exclude them from their Christian communion and fellowship.

3. If it be one design of God in continuing heresies, to distinguish real christians from false and erroneous professors, then there is a palpable impropriety and absurdity in attempting to unite those together in Christian harmony and communion who differ essentially in their religious sentiments. Many, at this day, are zealously engaged to bring about a coalition, harmony and connection, among almost all who profess the Christian name, though they widely differ in their opinions respecting the great and important doctrines of the gospel. It is, indeed, much to be desired, that all denominations of christians should be brought to believe, and love, and profess the first principles of the oracles of God. But it is not to be desired that they should visibly unite, while they are visibly disunited upon the most important religious subjects. Such a union would imply something more than mutual charity and condescension to each other; it would imply a mutual combination in error. It would be practically saying to each other, —if you will allow us to err from the truth, we will allow you to err from the truth. Can this be the proper way to answer the wise purposes of God in continuing the existence of heresies? He says that they *must* exist, that those whom he approves may be made manifest, and distinguished from those whom he disapproves and condemns. The promiscuous union and harmony among those who hold diametrically opposite sentiments, has a direct tendency to prevent making manifest the real difference between orthodox and heterodox christians; and is calculated to spread errors, heresies, and moral corruption through the whole Christian world. This the most erroneous and lax professors of Christianity know, and therefore have been the most forward and bold in proclaiming their unbounded catholicism and charity towards all who differ from them in their religious opinions. Those who believe and love the pure and important doctrines of the gospel, are willing to be made manifest, and to be known and distinguished from those who dislike, and despise, and reproach the most precious and important principles of the Christian religion. It is, therefore,

very unwise and criminal in the sincere professors of religion whom God approves, to unite with those who are ashamed of the gospel, and wish to hide their heterodoxy among the conflicting and undetermined sentiments of the more popular denominations. Sincere christians need to be upon their guard against those who, by their good words and fair speeches, would persuade them to unite harmoniously with concealed heretics and real infidels, who would either corrupt their sentiments, or obstruct their spiritual edification and growth in grace. Nor will such a union be injurious to themselves only, but to the cause of Christ in general, and tend to spread error and heresy through the world.

4. It appears from what has been said, that, when fatal errors and heresies greatly prevail, then is a time when God is about to purge and purify the church, and make manifest those who are approved among the professors of religion. He has told us that it is one of his good purposes to make manifest those whom he approves by the means of heresies. And it is easy to see that heresies naturally tend to draw a visible line of distinction between true and false professors in the churches of Christ. There is now a trying time among his followers. Those who are with him and for him, will gather with him; while those who are against him will scatter abroad. God has always produced his designed effect by errors, heresies and delusions. This was the case when Jeroboam corrupted the ten tribes by his idolatries and delusions. He drew together all the corrupt part of the Jewish church, and made manifest the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, whom God accepted, approved and blessed for ages. Error and heresy had arrived to their highest pitch in Luther's day, when God overruled them as the means of bringing about a great and general separation between the corrupt and uncorrupt branches of the Christian church. And the separation between Protestants and Roman Catholics has continued to this day, and produced the happiest effects among the nations of the earth. Error and heresy had risen to an enormous height in England, when they were instrumental in bringing about the memorable separation between dissenters and the heretical clergy in the established church; the happy influence of which separation, we in this country have always felt, and still feel. God's design in heresies is not to unite, but to disunite pure churches from those who are corrupt, and to purge the pure churches from their corrupt members. God now appears to be indicating his purpose of separating the precious from the vile, those whom he approves from those whom he disapproves, by the flood of errors, heresies and delusions, which are overflowing the land. It is

now a fanning and winnowing, a purging and purifying time among the churches. God has for years been sifting other nations, and is now sifting our nation with the sieve of vanity, to make manifest those whom he approves. It is a time, not to unite with, but to separate from, the erroneous and corrupt. The friends of truth are loudly called upon to show and exert themselves in the cause of truth, and in opposition to all heresies, errors and delusions. Heretics are employing all their learning, ingenuity and subtilty, to spread heresy and error among all the pure churches who seem to be asleep and insensible of their danger. It becomes them to awake, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and not be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

5. We learn from what has been said, the importance of ministers' preaching the gospel fully and plainly. If the gospel had always been preached fully and plainly, it is hard to conceive how heresies and fatal errors should have abounded so much in every age, and in every part of the world. The great and essential truths of the gospel approve themselves to every man's reason and conscience in the sight of God. And where they are fully and plainly taught, men are constrained to see and feel their weight and importance; and the absurdity of believing and embracing errors which are diametrically opposite to them. When the pure and essential doctrines of the gospel are fully and plainly taught, they cannot fail to make manifest the falsehood and absurdity of every fatal error and heresy. But if the gospel be not fully and plainly preached, it will naturally lead men into the most fatal errors; by enabling them to pervert the gospel, and to employ it to prove and sanction the worst of errors. All nominal christians who run into the greatest errors and delusions, invariably employ the gospel to support their false doctrines. But if the gospel were fully and plainly preached, every one would perceive that there is not a text in the Bible, which countenances, approves, or supports any religious error that ever was believed or propagated. It is the indispensable duty of ministers to declare *all* the counsel of God, and to explain and prove all the great and fundamental truths of the gospel, as clearly as possible. Those who object against doctrinal preaching, generally do it to prevent their errors from being exposed, and refuted, and condemned. The present mode of preaching is perfectly suited to unite and please all who wish to bring about a coalition between the orthodox and heterodox. While preachers omit to preach the doctrines of the gospel, and insist only on its duties, all denominations can

agree, and unite in their Christian fellowship and communion. It is the cardinal and essential doctrines of the gospel, concerning which professors of religion most widely and irreconcilably differ. They cannot, therefore, be united in the truth, until they are united in these doctrines. To preach these plainly, is the only proper and safe way of uniting christians.

6. It appears from the nature and tendency of heresy, that sinners at this day are in the most dangerous situation. They are surrounded by errorists and heretics on every side. They naturally love darkness rather than light, and error rather than truth. And when they imbibe error, they always imbibe it as truth. Of course they go on highly pleased with their own delusions, crying to themselves peace and safety, until they are undeceived when beyond recovery. Heresy is the most easy and deceptive path to destruction. And heresy is rapidly creeping in among us. But why? That they who are approved may be made manifest. Let those who are approved now manifest themselves, by raising the strongest barriers against heresy. Let them study the scriptures, labor to understand and defend the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and avoid seducers. These are the most proper means of preventing errorists from destroying themselves and others.

SERMON XVII.

NEUTRALITY RESPECTING CHRIST IMPOSSIBLE.

He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad. — Matthew, xii. 30.

The occasion of these words was this. There was brought unto Christ a man possessed with a devil, who was both blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. Though the miracle excited the admiration of the people in general, yet it raised the enmity and opposition of the Pharisees, who maliciously charged him with casting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Christ completely refutes this charge, by showing the absurdity of supposing that Satan should cast out Satan, and act against the interest of his own kingdom, for the sake of joining with him in building up the kingdom of God; and by showing the still greater absurdity of supposing that he should act in concert with Satan, whom he knew to be his most malignant and powerful enemy. For says he, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." To be with Christ, or against him, naturally signifies to be with him or against him in some design. Merely loving or hating a person, is not commonly considered as being with him, or against him. But this phrase generally signifies being united with, or opposed to a person, in some design he has formed and is pursuing. And in this sense Christ evidently meant to be understood in the text. For he was then actually carrying on that great and important design, which always has employed his thoughts, and always will employ them, until it is finally accomplished. In reference to this design he said, "He that is

not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." We may, therefore, justly conclude,

That no man can be indifferent towards the design which Christ is carrying on. I shall show,

I. What design Christ is carrying on; and

II. That no man can be indifferent towards it.

I. I am to show what design Christ is carrying on. He never had, and never will have but one design; and this design was concerted in the council of heaven, from the early days of eternity. Though all the persons in the sacred Trinity are united and engaged in this design, yet the most conspicuous and important part of it belongs to the office of Christ to fulfil. He has engaged in the work, and done much to accomplish it. He has come from heaven to earth, assumed human nature, suffered and died, risen from the dead, ascended up to heaven, taken the government of the world into his hands, and continues to act the part of a Prince and Saviour. But still the question recurs, What has he done, and is still doing, all these things for? or, What end or design is he carrying on? I answer, The great design of saving sinners. The work of redemption comprises all the works of creation and providence. Christ engaged from eternity to accomplish the work of man's redemption. This is the scriptural representation of Christ's design. As soon as the great deceiver had brought about the apostacy of our first parents, God graciously promised them that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, destroy the works of the devil, and save all who were predestinated to eternal life. Accordingly, when he appeared on earth, he declared that he was the son of God, and Saviour of the world; that he came to give his life a ransom for many; and that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. After his resurrection from the dead, he said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And the apostle declares, that God hath raised Christ from the dead, and "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." Thus it appears that the supreme and ultimate design which Christ has undertaken, which he is carrying on, and which he will finally accomplish, is the promotion of the glory of God

and the holiness and blessedness of his eternal kingdom, in the salvation of all penitent and believing sinners. And this must be allowed to be the greatest and best design, and the most interesting to all intelligent beings, that ever could be formed and executed. Therefore I go on to show,

II. That no man can be indifferent towards it. Christ expressly declares, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad;" which plainly implies that every man either approves, or disapproves his design, and inwardly desires to promote, or obstruct it. And that no man can be indifferent towards it will appear, if we consider the following things.

1. The design which Christ is pursuing, is the greatest of all possible designs in every point of view. It is great in its origin. It was concerted in the early days of eternity, by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and is as great a design as their united and infinite wisdom could form. It is great in extent. It reaches to, and comprises all beings and objects in the universe. It is great in its duration. It began to operate from the beginning of the world, and it will continue to operate to the end of the world, and from that period to all eternity; and produce effects the most interesting to every intelligent being, who will always be a spectator of them. Now it is not conceivable that any man should be indifferent towards this great and comprehensive design which Christ is carrying on, and which will deeply and eternally affect the minds of the whole intelligent universe.

2. The great design which Christ is pursuing, is totally opposed to all the selfish designs of mankind. Every man is naturally disposed to seek his own things, and pursue his own interests, independently of, and in opposition to, the interests of others. This selfish spirit reigns more or less in the hearts of all the children of men, and leads them to form ten thousand selfish and sinful designs, which they regard as very important to themselves. But the perfectly wise and benevolent design which Christ is pursuing, opposes and counteracts all the selfish designs of mankind. Their selfish designs respect their own good; but his design respects the glory of God. Their selfish designs respect temporal things; but his benevolent design respects eternal things. Their selfish designs respect nothing but happiness; but his benevolent design respects holiness as well as happiness, through all the periods of time and all the ages of eternity. So long as Christ lived in obscurity, and concealed his great and benevolent design in coming into the world, he grew in favor with God and man. But as soon as he made known his design, and pursued it in open

opposition to the views, the purposes, and selfish interests of the Jews, they hated him, reviled him, and opposed him with the utmost virulence, till they finally imbrued their hands in his blood. And wherever the gospel has made known his design, it has never failed of exciting the enmity and opposition of the wise and unwise, of the learned and unlearned, of kings and of kingdoms. It was foretold that Christ, in pursuing his great design, should raise the general resentment and opposition of mankind. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." Mankind never feel indifferent towards any person, or object, that counteracts and defeats their desires, designs, or pursuits. No man, therefore, who is not indifferent to his own temporal or eternal interests, can be indifferent towards the design which Christ is pursuing, and which will deeply affect his interests both for time and eternity. Every individual of the human race will be just such as Christ's design requires; either rich or poor, either bond or free, either great or small, either high or low, either good or bad, either happy or miserable, through every period of his existence. "Think not," said Christ, "that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And Jesus said again, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind." Christ, in pursuing his great and benevolent design, bends the characters, the conduct, the conditions and the interests of the whole world in subserviency to the interests of his own kingdom, and in opposition to the selfish characters, conduct, conditions and interests of all who are against him. And will any selfish heart be indifferent to such a person, pursuing such a design? Will not every holy heart be for him, and every unholy heart be against him?

3. Christ, in carrying on his great, comprehensive and benevolent design, employs all mankind as instruments in promoting it. Christ has all power in heaven and earth, and is able to subdue all things to himself, and to cause every creature and object in this world to be instrumental, some way or other, in effecting the great design he has constantly in view. He employed the winds and waves in his service. He made a fish supply him with tribute money. He claimed the right to

take from its owner a colt, to ride in triumph into Jerusalem. He employed twelve men at first, and seventy more afterwards, to preach the gospel, before his death. And after his resurrection, he commanded and commissioned the apostles and all their regular successors, to preach the gospel to all nations, to the end of the world. And he still employs the hearts and hands and influence of all other men in his service. He governs supremely and absolutely in the moral, as well as in the natural world, and makes his enemies, as well as his friends, the active and voluntary agents, in doing whatever he sees necessary for them to do in order to advance his cause and interest in the world. This was predicted of Christ under the type of Solomon, in the seventy-second Psalm. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall bow down before him; and all nations shall serve him." Men are naturally very unwilling to serve any cause, or promote any interest, which appears hostile to their own. But the cause which Christ is pursuing, is totally opposed to all the sinister views and selfish interests of mankind. They cannot, therefore, feel indifferent whether Christ shall succeed or not in his great design, or whether he shall employ them in acting for him against themselves. Had the builders of the ark known that the design of building it was to prepare the way for their own destruction, they would never have struck a stroke, to prepare it for the safety of others and the ruin of themselves. No sinner, who understands the design of Christ in the government of the world, can feel indifferent whether the design shall succeed, or whether he shall be an agent in effecting it. Accordingly, we find that, whenever and wherever Christ visibly succeeds in building up and enlarging his kingdom, none appear indifferent; but all that are not with him are against him; and generally not only feel, but speak, and act against him. Nevertheless, Christ causes them all to promote the very design they hate and mean to oppose. He makes the wrath of man praise him, and the remainder of wrath he always restrains. Christ has made all nations to serve him, from the beginning of the world to this day; and will make all nations serve him from this day to the end of the world, whether they are willing or unwilling to serve him. And in the view and belief of this truth, no man is, or can be indifferent to his great design. I may add,

4. None of the inhabitants of the invisible world are indifferent towards the great and interesting design which Christ has

undertaken, and is determined to accomplish. They have all been acquainted with it, and understood the origin, nature, extent and consequences of it, for nearly six thousand years; though it was not so early, or so generally known in this world. "Unto me," says the apostle, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The execution and accomplishment of Christ's eternal purpose, will deeply and eternally affect all good and all bad beings in the invisible world. The happiness of the holy, and the misery of the unholy angels, will be vastly augmented by the accomplishment of the great work of man's redemption, through the mediation and government of Christ. He has employed, and will employ them all in the great work in which he is engaged. He has employed unholy angels in introducing and spreading sin and misery among all the nations of the earth. And he has employed holy angels in promoting holiness and happiness in the world, and in counteracting and defeating the designs of Satan and wicked men. While the holy angels have been with Christ, and acted with him and for him, and rejoiced in every instance of success and accession to his cause, and in every instance of his victory and triumph over his enemies; the unholy angels have been against him, and endeavored to scatter abroad and ruin his church and kingdom. All the inhabitants of the invisible world are full of zeal for and against Christ's design, and will never cease in their opposite and powerful exertions, until it is finally and fully accomplished. While all heaven and hell are not indifferent toward the design of Christ, can it be supposed that any of mankind should be indifferent towards it, who are infinitely more interested in it; having all their eternal interests suspended upon it? No; far from it. The apostle John tells us that he saw in vision men, angels and devils, all fiercely engaged in contending for it, and against it. "And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not. — And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. — And I heard a loud voice, saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and

the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore, rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them." The great design of Christ is becoming more and more interesting and affecting to the whole intelligent universe, and they are all more and more engaged, either to promote it, or to obstruct it; nor is there a single individual, who understands it, indifferent towards it. He that is not with Christ, is against him and his great and glorious design.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If none can be indifferent towards the design which Christ is carrying on, then none have any ground to imagine that they are neuters in religion. It is to be feared that many, who live under the light of the gospel, wish to persuade themselves that they are neither friendly nor unfriendly to Christ. They do not desire to profess any love to Christ and his cause, nor, on the other hand, do they desire to appear opposed to him, or the design he is pursuing. They mean to be neutral in respect to religion, and neither promote it nor oppose it. They see some very sensible and respectable persons professing to be with Christ, and to be engaged to promote his cause, and therefore, they wish not to counteract them. And they see some very vile and worthless persons openly professing to despise and oppose the cause of Christ, and they choose not to appear as belonging to their class. They endeavor to feel, and appear to feel, indifferent towards that cause, which some are so much for, and others are so much against. They determine to steer a middle course, and to act a neutral part. They choose to let religion alone, and pay no more regard to it than they find necessary, in order to pursue their own business to the best advantage. If their character or interest requires them to attend public worship, they will attend; or if custom requires them to pay an external respect to the Sabbath, they will pay that respect; or if circumstances require them to read the Bible, or even to pray in their families, they will do these things; or if they think it will be for their profit to support religion, they will support it. They are also resolved never to speak against religion, nor to appear to act against it. Is this a mere imaginary character? Is it not actually exhibited by many who esteem themselves, and are esteemed, very amiable, excellent, valuable persons? Neuters of this character are very numerous, and are willing to be considered as such by others. But though they may really

think themselves to be neutral, and may be thought to be so by their fellow men, yet they are not neutral, and do not appear to be neutral in the heart searching eye of Christ. He knows what is in man, and he knows that no man can be indifferent towards him and the great design he is pursuing. He declares the truth when he says, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." There is no design with respect to which men are so fond of appearing neutral, as the design which Christ is engaged in; but there is no design to which they can be less neutral. It is extremely absurd and dangerous for any to imagine that they are really neutral to the most important cause that was ever pursued, and upon which their own interest, and the interest of the whole intelligent universe is suspended. They must be happy or miserable to all eternity, accordingly as they are with, or against Christ, in his great and glorious design. For, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, God says, "Let him be anathema, maran-atha."

2. If none can be indifferent towards the design which Christ is carrying on, then all who do not act for him, act against him. As all must be for him or against him in their hearts, so all must be for him or against him in their conduct. So Christ plainly declares in the text. He says, "He that is not with me, is against me;" that is, he that is not for me in his heart, is against me in his heart. Again he says, "He that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad;" that is, he that is not for me in his heart, is against me in his conduct; "he scattereth abroad," and really opposes my design. Thus Christ viewed, represented and treated, such as pretended to be with him, but were destitute of true love to him. "It came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." This was an implicit rejection of him for his insincerity. "When he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." He knew that those who professed to love and believe in him, were totally destitute of both love and faith, and rejected them accordingly. When those whom he had miraculously fed, followed him over the sea of Tiberias, he said unto them, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." This was a severe reproof for their following

him externally, while their hearts were far from him. Though those who are destitute of love to Christ, may profess to love him, to be with him, to act for him, and to be workers together with him in building up his kingdom; still they are against him, and scatter abroad. Paul acknowledges, that though he should preach like an angel, and suffer like a martyr, without love to Christ and his cause, it would not be acting for him, but against him. He says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." It is more than possible that not a few who live under the light of the gospel, who profess to love the gospel, who attend all the ordinances of the gospel, and who do a great many things, which under the government of Christ tend to promote the design of the gospel, are nevertheless, in his view, against him, and scatter abroad. Men must be inwardly with Christ, in order to be externally for him. While men ultimately seek their own things, they cannot seek the things of Christ. So long as they are internally against him, they are externally against him, let them say, and do, or suffer, ever so much for him.

3. If all who are with Christ are united to him in his great and glorious design, then all who are united to him are more firmly united to one another, than any other persons in the world. There is nothing that unites the men of the world so strongly together, as their union in their worldly designs. Union of design will often bind those together who are disunited in affection. Worldly designs, however, are liable to fail, or change, and consequently the unions formed by them are often dissolved. But the great design of Christ is immutable and eternal, and all who are united to him in his design, are immutably and eternally united to him and one another. Christians are united to each other, not only in affection, but in a design that cannot be defeated, or change. Hence Paul triumphantly asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? — Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to

separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The sincere and ardent brotherly love of the primitive christians excited the admiration of the world. The heathens exclaimed, "How these christians love one another!" The union of christians to one another is founded in their union to Christ in his great and glorious design; and can no more fail, than Christ can fail in finishing the work which his Father has given him to do.

4. If all who are not for Christ are against him, then the most regular and amiable sinners may be as much against him as any other sinners. They are as unwilling to have their desires, their hopes, their interests, and selfish designs counteracted and defeated, as the most stupid and abandoned sinners. But if Christ pursues and accomplishes his great and benevolent design, he will entirely disappoint and destroy all the selfish hopes, desires, and designs of the most regular and amiable sinners, which cannot fail to raise their enmity and opposition to him in the most lively and sensible manner. Accordingly, we find that this has always been the case. Sinners of the fairest character and of the highest estimation in their own view, and in the view of the world, were the bitterest enemies that Christ had while on earth. These were the Scribes and Pharisees, whose character and conduct Christ most pointedly condemned, and whose condition he represented as the most dangerous and deplorable. They saw that Christ's design was diametrically opposed to theirs, and would completely destroy their eternal hopes and interests. Sinners of the fairest characters and highest hopes at this day, view the design of Christ in the same light, and are, of all others, the most opposed to that eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus, and sent him into the world to accomplish. What persons are generally more opposed to the doctrine of election and reprobation, than the most intelligent and inquisitive sinners? They generally know more about the character and design of Christ, and the scheme of salvation revealed in the gospel, than thoughtless and careless sinners; and of course they are generally the most understandingly and heartily opposed to the gospel, and raise the strongest objections against it. And this holds true with respect to awakened sinners, who externally reform, and most ardently inquire what they must do to be saved. When they are told that they must believe in Christ, love his character, and cordially approve of his carrying into execution his eternal purpose of saving those whom his Father has given him, and no others, their hearts rise in total enmity, and they invariably say, This man shall not reign over us.

5. We learn from what has been said, the great criminality

of sinners. They are all against Christ in their hearts and in their conduct, without a single exception. They both see, and hate, and oppose that eternal purpose, which Christ is constantly carrying into execution. And by opposing this great and glorious purpose, they oppose the glory of God, and all the holiness and happiness in the universe. Is this a small error, or a mere venial fault? Is it not a sin of the first magnitude? Can they be guilty of a greater? It is criminal to destroy the property of an individual. It is more criminal to destroy the life of an individual. It is more criminal still to destroy the lives of millions. And it is the highest possible degree of criminality to destroy the holiness and happiness of the whole universe. And this sin can be committed in the heart, and is committed in the heart of every one who is against Christ, and gathers not with him, but scatters abroad, and does all in his power to prevent the infinite good which will eternally flow from the accomplishment of Christ's design. Is this true? some sinner may be ready to ask. Let me ask that person whether he would not choose that the good of the universe should be destroyed, rather than to be eternally miserable? And if he would choose this, he would destroy the good of the universe, were it in his power, to prevent his own eternal destruction. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God; and he wishes that there might be none, rather than suffer his eternal wrath. The carnal mind, therefore, is enmity against God, not subject to his law or government; neither indeed can be. This every person knows to be true, who has seen the plague of his own heart. Unbelief, or opposition to the person and design of Christ, is the greatest of all sins, and will draw after it the greatest of all punishments. It shall be more tolerable for the men of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for sinners who die impenitent and unbelieving under the gospel.

6. This subject shows the imminent danger of all who are against Christ, and opposing his great and glorious design. They reject the counsel of God against themselves; but that counsel will stand; and if it does stand, it will necessarily destroy all the counsels, and designs, and desires, and hopes, and happiness of sinners. Christ himself possesses omnipotent power, and has all created objects and created beings under his absolute control; and can employ them all as instruments to accomplish his eternal purpose. How is it possible then, that he should be counteracted and defeated in his design? Sinners may misconstrue and misunderstand particular passages of scripture; but they cannot misconstrue and misunderstand the great design which Christ is pursuing, and will certainly accom-

plish. And if he accomplishes his design, the hopes of the finally impenitent to escape with impunity, must perish. If Christ continues to reign, he will make all his incorrigible enemies his footstool, and sink them in endless perdition. Christ has commanded it to be proclaimed throughout the world, that "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." All delaying sinners are constantly liable to be cut off, and lie down in eternal sorrow. Their feet stand on slippery places, and all that Christ is doing to carry on his design, is ripening and preparing them for a more aggravated doom. And all that they are doing while against Christ, is increasing their guilt, and the wrath of the Lamb. So long as they delay to act for Christ, they act against him, and by acting against him, they act against themselves and all the good of the universe. Unless they turn to Christ, and become cordially reconciled to him, they will draw down the displeasure of Christ, and the displeasure of all holy beings in the universe, which will sink them in the depth of eternal despair.

Finally, This subject affords a solid ground of peace and safety to those who are united to Christ in his great and good design. If he succeeds, they are safe. If he promotes his own interests, he will promote theirs. If he is accepted of the Father, they will be accepted in him. If he is rewarded for all his labors and sufferings, they shall be rewarded for all their labors and sufferings in his cause. If he sits down with the Father on his throne, they shall sit down with him on his throne. If his glory and blessedness shall be eternally rising, they shall eternally rise in glory and blessedness with him. The gospel which unfolds the nature, extent, and eternal consequences of the accomplishment of Christ's design, opens the most glorious prospects to all the friends and followers of the divine Redeemer. They shall rejoice while others mourn. They shall be completely holy and blessed, while all the enemies of Christ are completely sinful and wretched. Be not then weary in well doing; but be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the service of Christ, knowing that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

SERMON XVIII.

THE BLINDNESS OF SINNERS THEIR DESTRUCTION.

The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble. Proverbs, iv. 19.

All men are either saints or sinners, either holy or unholy, either righteous or wicked; and they are all walking in paths as different as the characters they sustain. The saints are walking in a strait and narrow path; the sinners are walking in a crooked and broad path; the saints are walking in a path that leads to perfect light, and the sinners are walking in a path that leads to perfect darkness. This is the representation which Solomon gives of all mankind. He says, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But he observes by way of contrast, "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." His plain meaning is this:

Sinners are in such darkness, that they are insensible of the objects which are leading them to ruin.

I shall first consider the darkness in which sinners are involved; and then illustrate the general observation, that they are insensible of the objects which are leading them to ruin.

I. Let us consider the darkness in which sinners are involved. We find much said in scripture concerning their peculiar blindness and darkness. Moses represents them as "groping at noon day." Job says, "They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope in the noon day as in the night." Isaiah says, "They have made them crooked paths; they grope for the wall as the blind, and grope as if they had no eyes; they stumble at noon day as in the night." David represents their way as "dark and slippery;" and Jeremiah represents them as walking

"in slippery ways in darkness." The royal preacher says, "The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness." It appears from all these representations, that all sinners are involved in gross darkness. But to what is this darkness owing, or in what does it consist? It cannot be owing to any deficiency in their natural powers, nor to any want of intellectual information. They enjoy the same means of instruction that saints enjoy, and are as capable of understanding the doctrines and duties of religion. The Bible points out the way to heaven as clearly to them, as to others; and sets the same motives before them to walk in the same strait and narrow path to eternal life. Their darkness, therefore, is not natural, but moral darkness, which lies not in their understandings, but in their hearts, which are entirely depraved. Moral depravity always produces moral blindness. Our Saviour says, "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." The heart is the same to the soul, that the eye is to the body. As a good eye lets in natural light, so a good heart lets in moral light; and as a blind eye shuts out natural light, so a bad heart shuts out moral light. Accordingly, the apostle expressly ascribes the darkness of the understanding to the blindness of the heart. He represents all unrenewed men, as "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." While sinners remain under the entire dominion of a wicked heart, they are altogether blind to the moral beauty of the character, of the works, and of the providence of God. Their blindness to these divine objects the Psalmist describes in very strong and impressive terms. "They know not, neither will they understand: they walk in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course." God is a being of pure benevolence. He constructed the world upon benevolent principles, and he governs it to answer benevolent purposes. This is all dark to sinners, who view all things with a selfish eye. They can trace nothing into light, but all things into darkness. The present and future state of the world is all darkness, and they see no light in their own, nor in any other creature's existence. Notwithstanding all God has said about himself, and about his creatures, and about his designs, the whole universe still appears to them dark and mysterious. Being alienated from the life of God, and opposed to all true benevolence, their minds are totally involved in moral darkness. When they extend their views to the end of life, to the end of the world, and to the boundless scenes of eternity, they cannot discover a gleam of

light. They are a mystery to themselves; and all the changes and revolutions in the natural and moral world are dark and unaccountable to them. The foundations of the earth are all out of course in their view, and the nature and tendency of all things are utterly repugnant to their wishes and desires, and appear to counteract all their hopes and purposes. And if God is pursuing and will accomplish perfectly holy and benevolent designs, these will counteract and defeat all their selfish interests and promising prospects, and involve them in total darkness and hopeless ruin. But yet,

II. They are insensible of the objects over which they are stumbling and falling. "They know not at what they stumble." This has been the case of sinners in all ages. We find many melancholy instances of this kind in the Bible. The blindness of Pharaoh's heart led him insensibly to stumble, and fall, and perish. The rebellious Israelites had not eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor hearts to perceive; but walked in darkness, until they stumbled and fell, and perished in the wilderness. The seven nations of Canaan were involved in moral darkness, and perceived not their danger, until they were destroyed. It was Saul's moral blindness and obstinacy which led him in the path to ruin. And it was the same moral blindness that led the Jews to stumble and fall in the gospel day. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded; (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear,) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see." The consequence was, they stumbled and fell. Spiritual blindness is the same in all sinners, at all times; and has the same dangerous and destructive tendency. It makes them walk in darkness, and stumble over every thing that lies in their way, without their knowing at what they stumble. Every thing is armed against them, and yet they do not see the danger to which they are exposed. They walk as carelessly as if nothing could hurt them. When they are wounded, they do not feel their wounds; and though they stumble, every step they take, yet they vainly imagine that they shall never fall. The reason is, they know not at what they stumble, and are insensible of the objects which are constantly leading them to destruction. This may be illustrated in a variety of particulars.

1. They are insensible that they stumble at the great deceiver. The Bible represents this evil spirit as employing all his power and subtlety to seduce and destroy sinners. He is said to blind

the minds of them that believe not. He is said to be the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. He is said to walk about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is full of his devices to ensnare and destroy the ungodly. He knows how to take advantage of their ignorance, stupidity and depravity. He has not only the power, but the art of tempting. He adapts his temptations to the state, the character and disposition of sinners. Some he tempts to disbelieve the being of God; some he tempts to disbelieve the word of God; some he tempts to oppose the gospel; and many more he tempts to neglect and refuse a cordial compliance with the offers of mercy. He tempts the awakened to stifle convictions, and return to a state of stupidity. While he tempts moral sinners to self righteousness and self dependence, he seduces others to walk in the smooth and broad road to destruction. But though sinners are thus led captive by Satan from day to day and from year to year, yet they are totally insensible of his malignant influence over them, and know not that he is perpetually causing them to stumble. They sometimes, indeed, see the objects which he employs to seduce them, but still they are insensible of his seducing influence. They know not that they are continually walking in the paths of the destroyer, who is leading them blindfold to destruction.

2. Sinners are not sensible that they are stumbling at one another. They are all taking the same course and pursuing the same objects. They are united in their disaffection to God, and in their love to the world. They join hand in hand, and all lead, and are led. Those who are before, look back and see multitudes following them; and those who are behind, look forward and see multitudes before them. Their numbers inspire them with courage and resolution; for they cannot imagine that so many of their fellow men are deceived, and are walking together in the path to ruin. Besides, they are constantly telling one another, either expressly or implicitly, that there is no danger, and that they may safely and joyfully pursue their present course. Though they are in danger from Satan, yet they are in much greater danger from one another. The eye and ear affect the heart. They are continually seeing each other's conduct, and hearing each other's language. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. They all directly or indirectly invite each other to walk together, and never leave nor forsake one another. They use all their influence, by example, by smiles and frowns, to increase their numbers, and maintain their strength and security. Thus moral sinners are a stumbling block to the immoral, and the immoral are a stumbling block to the moral. The aged are a stumbling block to

the young, and the young are a stumbling block to the aged. Thus all classes and ages of sinners are mutually stumbling blocks to each other; yet they are all so involved in spiritual darkness, that they know not at what they stumble. They seem to have no apprehension that the friendship of the world is enmity to God, and that to follow a multitude in doing evil, is the direct road to destruction.

3. Sinners are insensible that they stumble at divine providence. God governs the natural and moral world by a constant and powerful, but invisible influence, which he exerts with great regularity and uniformity. This gives occasion to the morally blind and stupid to disregard his holy hand, and disbelieve his universal government. Ezekiel tells us that, in his day, sinners said, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not." Zephaniah tells us, that those who were settled on their lees, in his day, said, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." And the apostle tells us, that sinners would continue to imbibe such sentiments, and scoffingly say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The very evidence which God is every day giving sinners of his being and providence, leads them to forget, or to doubt, or to deny both. But if they do see and acknowledge God in his providence, yet they entirely misconstrue it. Since he causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall on the evil as well as on the good, and since he causes all things to come alike to the evil as well as to the good; they thence conclude that he loves them all alike, and will treat them all alike in a future world, as well as in this. Because he does not execute vengeance speedily, they presumptuously imagine he never will; and because he waits to be gracious, they flatter themselves that his patience and forbearance will never end. His goodness instead of leading them to repentance, leads them to impenitence, unbelief and presumption. Though the frowns of Providence sometimes awaken their fears, yet they more commonly excite their enmity and opposition to his righteous treatment. So that they are constantly and insensibly stumbling over both the smiles and frowns of Providence.

4. Sinners are insensible that their common employments are dangerous objects, over which they are stumbling and falling. They are apt to think that while they are industriously pursuing their lawful callings, they are in the path of duty and safety. Their secular concerns habitually engross their thoughts and affections, and cement their hearts to the world. Though they are commanded to do every thing heartily to the Lord, and whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, to seek the glory

of God; and though they are forbidden to love the world and the things of the world; yet they do every thing for themselves, and labor solely for the meat that perisheth. But while they are habitually indulging their selfish feelings, they are wholly insensible that the ploughing of the wicked is sin, and that their worldly motives, in their worldly pursuits, are leading them to ruin. Their daily cares and concerns continually divert their attention and affections from all invisible and eternal objects. All earthly objects serve to make them earthly minded. They cannot serve God and mammon. For while they are laying up treasures for themselves, they are not rich towards God; and yet know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. They are so blind to the selfish and sinful motives of their own hearts, in their common secular concerns, that all their worldly employments are insensibly leading them in the path to destruction.

5. They are no less blind to the nature and tendency of their religious performances. Though some sinners do not perform any duties of religion externally, and of course, do not place any dependence upon them; yet there are many who statedly read the Bible, call upon God, and attend the religious duties of the sanctuary. These externals of religion they seriously, and, as they imagine, conscientiously perform, while their hearts are far from God. By maintaining these forms of religion, they are so blind as to think that they are really doing their duty, and performing a reasonable and acceptable service to their Maker. So Paul thought, before he became acquainted with his own heart; and so the young man in the gospel thought, who said he had kept all the commandments of God; and so all moral sinners think. They trust in themselves that they are righteous, and shall be saved, because they are better than others. Their religious performances encourage and animate them to pursue a way which seemeth right in their own eyes, though the end thereof be the way to death. They have no suspicion that their supposed prayers, and duties, and good works, are an abomination to the Lord, and leading them to endless darkness and despair. Such was the deplorable case of the self righteous and blinded Jews, for whose salvation the apostle fervently prayed. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." They were blind to the character of God, and to the deep depravity of their own hearts, which made them insensible that they were stumbling

over their religious duties, and falling to rise no more. Some of the most amiable sinners are thus walking and groping in the dark path to destruction, while they are fondly expecting they shall eventually reach the kingdom of glory.

6. The moral blindness of sinners insensibly leads them to stumble at the preaching they hear. They often love to hear the gospel preached, and cherish a pleasing hope that it will, sooner or later, prove a savor of life unto life to them. God says of the sinners in Zion, "They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways. They ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." They often go to the house of God, with a serious intention to hear for their lives, and not to be hearers only, but doers of the word. But walking in darkness under the blinding influence of their unholy hearts, they either misunderstand, or misapply, or oppose the truths they hear. If preachers point out one stumbling block, they will blindly stumble over another. If they warn them against one false way, they will blindly run into another. If they clearly show them that, by pursuing their present course, they must certainly perish, yet they will persist in their delusion, and risk the fatal consequences. They stumble at the most alluring and most alarming truths exhibited before them and inculcated upon them. The morally blinded stumble at the very same truths which the morally enlightened believe to the saving of their souls. The apostle Paul says that the unbelieving Jews stumbled at that stumbling stone and rock of offence, which God had laid in Zion. And the apostle Peter repeats the same divine declaration concerning blind and impenitent sinners. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed." But those who hear and disbelieve the gospel have no idea that they stumble at it, and are highly displeased when they are charged with it. "Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world: that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?" I must add,

7. That sinners are blind to the blindness of their own hearts, which are insensibly leading them to blackness and darkness for ever. Their hearts are deceitful above all things, and des-

perately wicked. The deceitfulness of the heart leads them to think they intend right, when they act wrong, and that their hearts are better than their actions. Though they know that their hearts are sometimes as bad as their actions, and even worse, still they think there is some goodness in their hearts, upon which they place great dependence. They trust in their own hearts to dispose them to reform, to repent, and to believe, and finally obtain pardoning mercy. And this confidence in the goodness of their own hearts, removes all fear of future and eternal misery. But if they are constrained to see the badness of their hearts, they will plead the badness of their hearts as an excuse for hating God, for rejecting the offers of mercy, and for remaining in impenitence and unbelief; not knowing that these self justifying pleas have a direct tendency to destroy them for ever. They are every day stumbling over their own hearts, which are deceitfully and insensibly leading them in the broad and smooth way to endless darkness and despair.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If sinners are so blind and insensible to the dangerous objects with which they are surrounded, and over which they are stumbling, it is not strange that they generally live so securely and joyfully. It has always appeared strange as well as grievous to the godly, to see the ungodly live securely and joyfully, though under a sentence of death, and continually exposed to the wrath to come. Job was surprised to see the wicked spend their days in wealth, in joy, and in festivity. David was grieved at the prosperity of the wicked, and could not account for their not being in trouble like other men. Amos was astonished to see the sinners in Zion live in ease, put far away the evil day, lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall, chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David, drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments. Not only this, but every other class of impenitent sinners, appear to live in more ease and security than any other persons in the world. Though sinners widely differ from one another in a great many respects, yet in one respect they are very much alike. They generally live without God in the world, and without fear of his future and eternal wrath. Such stupidity in rational and immortal creatures, who know that they are probationers for eternity, seems very strange, and cannot be accounted for upon any other ground than that moral blindness and darkness in which they are all involved.

Though they have eyes, they cannot see; though they have ears, they cannot hear; though they have hearts, they cannot perceive; and though they are told that they are blind and walking in darkness upon the brink of destruction, they will not believe it. Though they are continually stumbling at the things of the world, the men of the world, and the god of the world, they know not at what they stumble, but imagine they are walking safely. And it is not strange, that those who see no danger, should fear no danger. Where is the sinner who fears that the god of this world, or the men of this world, or that his own heart, will destroy him? Where is the sinner who fears that he is every day preparing himself for final perdition? Or, where is the sinner who does not live securely and even joyfully, notwithstanding all he has ever read or heard about his depravity, his guilt, or his danger? Where is the sinner who is afraid of leading the blind, or of being led by the blind? And why should this appear strange, since blindness has happened to all sinners, which makes them insensible of the objects over which they are continually stumbling and falling? The carelessness and stupidity of sinners is a visible demonstration of their moral blindness to all moral objects. Those who deny the moral blindness of sinners, discover their own moral blindness, and maintain a doctrine which not only scripture condemns, but universal observation refutes. Nothing but this moral blindness can account for the conduct of the great majority of mankind, who are crying peace and safety, while exposed to instant destruction.

2. If all sinners are involved in such moral darkness as makes them insensible of their dangerous and perishing condition, then it is not strange, that they are so displeased at having their danger clearly pointed out. This tends to interrupt their present peace and comfort, and to destroy all their future hopes and prospects of happiness. If they are once made to realize their danger of the damnation of hell, their ease, security and joy are completely destroyed. They cannot bear, therefore, to hear the plain truth, respecting their wretchedness and guilt. The experiment has been often made; and the effects have been recorded by the pen of inspiration. Sinners could not bear to hear the plain preaching of the prophets, nor the plain preaching of Christ, nor the plain preaching of the apostles. Those preachers did not make danger, they only pointed out danger so plainly that sinners could not help seeing it. It was this that excited their bitterest complaints and most sensible opposition. The truth is still the same, and sinners still feel the same opposition to it, when set in the same light. They cannot bear to hear of their moral blindness, nor of the danger

to which it exposes them both in this life and the life to come. They cannot bear to hear that they are walking in darkness, and know not at what they stumble, nor the fatal consequences of stumbling. But they have no reason to complain of those who clearly point out their danger. It is an act of kindness to point out the danger to which a blind man is exposed, and to direct a man who is lost, to the right road from which he is wandering. Sinners are really walking in the path of the destroyer, who is leading them captive at his will; they are really groping in darkness, and wandering from the strait and narrow path to eternal life, and must perish, unless they are made to see and avoid the dangers with which they are surrounded. But they will not take one step to avoid danger until they see it; and they will not see it if they can possibly help seeing it. This all faithful teachers know; and therefore feel themselves under indispensable obligation to show them their danger, in the plainest and most impressive manner. They watch for souls as those who must give account, and stand responsible if any perish through their neglect, or unfaithfulness. They are to warn sinners of their danger, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, whether they are pleased, or displeased. And if they do hear, they will be thankful for the most solemn warnings and the most searching truths, addressed to their consciences. They will find that the truths which they most hated and opposed, did them the most good.

3. If sinners are blind to the objects which are insensibly leading them to destruction, then they are in extreme danger of being finally lost. All things conspire to destroy them, because they abuse all things with which they are connected and concerned. Prosperity tends to destroy them. If God treats them kindly, and pours the blessings of providence into their bosoms, they are disposed to abuse every favor they enjoy. If God frowns upon them, and subjects them to every species of adversity, they will murmur and complain, and abuse his holy and righteous chastisements. If he uses the best means of grace with them, they will abuse them, and take encouragement from them to continue in impenitence and unbelief. If he waits to be gracious to them, and spares their lives and their health, they will live to themselves, and not to him. If he alarms their fears, and they cannot forbear to read and hear, seek and strive to escape future and eternal misery, they will trust in themselves that they are righteous, and on that account, refuse to submit to the self denying terms of salvation. The more they think, and say, and do themselves, and the more is said to them, and done for them, the more their darkness increases, and the more stumbling blocks they meet with. Their

path is like the setting sun, which withdraws every beam of light from the eye, and leaves every one in total darkness. This they find to be true, by their own experience, as they pass from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age, whether they have lived in security, or whether they have lived in bondage through fear of death. As nothing has served to remove their darkness, but every thing has served to increase it, so every thing is armed against them, and threatens their final ruin. If you should ask any sinner of any age, character or condition, whether the path in which he is now walking grows any lighter, or his prospects of future and eternal happiness any brighter, he will answer, No; but the longer he lives, his path grows darker and darker. And the most aged sinner walks in the greatest darkness, and is most exposed to stumble and fall, and rise no more. Thick clouds and darkness are gathering fast over the paths of sinners, and all things are conspiring to increase the danger of their being finally lost. There is not a gleam of hope in their case, from men or means. These have proved ineffectual, and they will continue to be ineffectual, though Paul plant and Apollos water, unless God sees fit to give an increase; which he has delayed to do, and may delay to do until the day of their death, and they close their eyes in everlasting darkness. And this truth, like every other truth they have ever heard, may prove a stumbling block, and an occasion of their endless destruction.

4. If sinners are constantly growing blinder and blinder, and more and more insensible of the things which are leading them to ruin, then they are entirely in the sovereign hand of God, who may save or destroy them, according to his holy and righteous pleasure. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, who showeth mercy. And he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion, and whom he will he hardeneth. This prerogative belongs to him, and he solemnly declares that he will exercise it. "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." Sinners would fain flee out of his hand, and the false friends of sinners would fain take them out of his hand; but this is impossible. And their real friends have no disposition to take them out of his hand, but cheerfully resign them to his sovereign disposal. Though sinners are apt to think it is extremely hard that God should hold them in his sovereign hand, yet it is entirely owing to the blindness of their hearts that they think so. For it is the dictate of their own reason and conscience, that they deserve everlasting misery, and that God would be

just and even amiable in making them the vessels of his everlasting wrath; and that, without being reconciled to his amiable sovereignty, they cannot be happy either in this world, or the next. It is vain and dangerous, therefore, to say or do any thing, which tends to make sinners believe that they can find any path to heaven, in which divine sovereignty will not meet them, and in which they can arrive at heaven, without being cordially reconciled to it. This, however, is too often attempted, by those who deny the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and by those who profess to believe it, but never plainly and fully preach it. It is easy to bring sinners out of any darkness but that which arises from divine sovereignty; for it is easy to make them see that there is no difficulty in the way of their salvation, but what, with their natural hearts, they can surmount, if they are not obliged to exercise unconditional submission to divine sovereignty. They are often willing to do any thing and every thing else rather than to be for ever miserable; but this they say and feel that they cannot do. But it is vain and dangerous to tell them that they need not, and ought not, to do this. Whether they see it, or their teachers see it, or not, they are in the sovereign hand of God; and they must see, and believe, and love this truth, or they can never truly love and enjoy God. If they finally stumble at this truth, they stumble never to rise again. And no means that men can use, and no light that they can exhibit, can prevent their stumbling and perishing.

5. Since sinners are walking in darkness and blind to every thing which is insensibly leading them to destruction, it is owing to the distinguishing and astonishing grace of God that any are saved. Their darkness is irremovable by any human means, and all external objective light serves to increase it. Their eyes have they closed, and will not open them, and God might justly leave them to walk in their own chosen way of darkness. It is, therefore, mere sovereign and distinguishing grace in God, who caused the light at first to shine out of darkness, to shine in their hearts, and give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. When God calls any out of darkness into his marvellous light, they never fail gratefully to acknowledge his undeserved and distinguishing mercy. It looks astonishing that they should be taken, while others are left.

6. This subject now calls upon all to inquire whether they have ever been made the subjects of God's special grace. Have they ever found themselves walking in darkness? Has their darkness ever been removed? And is their present path, like the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day? Does the present state of sinners here appear to you very

dangerous and deplorable? Do you take pains to remove stumbling blocks? They are thrown in from every quarter.

7. Let the blind and deaf immediately perform the duty, which God expressly enjoins upon them. "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see." This command you are bound to obey, and if you refuse to obey, God will eventually say, "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears," that they may hear their sentence of final condemnation, and see and take the place of their eternal punishment.

SERMON XIX.

FEEBLE MINDED CHRISTIANS.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. — Matthew, xii. 20.

In order to understand these words, it seems necessary to read a number of the preceding verses with which they are intimately connected. After Christ had healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, "Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence; and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all, and charged them that they should not make him known: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Something like this seems to be the true sense of the passage: "You Jews, imagine that the Messiah will come to set up a temporal kingdom in this world, to aggrandize your nation, and save them from the oppression and tyranny of the Gentiles, to whom you have so long been subjected. But in this you are greatly deceived. I, who profess to be the promised Messiah, am not come to gain temporal, but spiritual victories. I am not come to execute vengeance, but to display mercy, agreeably to the predictions concerning the promised Messiah, which you have often read in the prophecies of Isaiah and other prophets. I am come to seek that which was lost,

to strengthen that which was weak, and to heal that which was sick. I will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; but I will bind up the broken hearted, and comfort the feeble minded, until I have obtained a spiritual victory and triumphed over both Jews and Gentiles. My kingdom cometh not with observation, or with tumults and convulsion, like other kingdoms, but silently and irresistibly, in the hearts of men. I have cured the withered hand, I have healed multitudes that followed me, and I am now ready to heal the minds as well as the bodies of men, and perform the whole work which I was sent into the world to perform." The spirit of the text in this connection, justifies us in saying,

That Christ is ready to receive and comfort the feeble minded. I shall,

I. Describe the feeble minded;

II. Consider how it comes to pass that they are feeble minded; and,

III. Show that Christ is ready to receive and comfort them.

I. I am to describe the feeble minded.

These are certainly such as resemble the bruised reed and smoking flax. They are those of a broken and contrite spirit, and essentially different from the stout hearted. Their carnal mind has been slain, and their stony hearts softened. They have experienced a saving change, but still are in darkness and difficulty. They feel their need of comfort, and their unworthiness of it. This is the general character of the feeble minded, in distinction from those who are strong in faith. But it may be proper and useful to give a more specific description of the feeble minded; for they do really differ in various respects, though they are essentially alike. Here it may be observed,

1. That those are feeble minded, who have submission to God, without faith in Christ. This is often the case with young converts. Their enmity to God is taken away; their objections are removed; they cease to contend with their Maker; they justify him and condemn themselves; they realize that they are in his hand, as the clay is in the hands of the potter; and they are willing that he should dispose of them as shall be most for his own glory. While they lie here submissively at the foot of divine sovereignty, their past fears and distresses leave them in a solemn calm that they cannot account for, but are apt to conclude that God has given them up to stupidity. Though they really submit to God, yet they do not believe in Christ. They realize that God may justly destroy them, but do not see how he can justly and consistently save them. They are still ignorant of the way of salvation through the atonement of Christ; and, being ignorant of this, they do not exercise faith in the

only and all sufficient Mediator; which leaves them in darkness. In such a weak, feeble and comfortless situation, many have continued not only for days and weeks, but even for months, if not for years. These persons resemble the smoking flax before it begins to blaze.

2. Those are feeble minded, who have submission and faith, but no hope. Submission and faith may both exist in the heart, without creating a hope of salvation. Those who have submitted to divine sovereignty, and seen the way of life through Christ, may not know nor think, that their submission and faith are genuine exercises of grace, and entitle them to the promises of the gospel. Though they are conscious of love to God and love to Christ, still they imagine that they do not feel as they have always supposed that true converts feel. The change of views and feelings in their minds does not appear to them like what they have supposed a saving change to be. Though they are sensible that they feel differently from what they once felt, yet they durst not indulge a hope that they have passed from death unto life, and are in a renewed, pardoned and justified state. They sensibly desire to obtain pardoning mercy, and feel determined to seek and strive for salvation as long as they live. There are a great many such persons in the world, who appear to others, by what they say and do, to be real christians, and yet entertain no hope themselves of their own good estate. Their hearts appear to be broken like the bruised reed, their consciences appear to be enlightened and tender, and they discover sparks of grace, which resemble the smoking flax before it bursts into a flame.

3. There is another class of the feeble minded; I mean such as have submission, faith and hope, but yet have little confidence in their gracious state. They sometimes hope, and sometimes fear, but generally doubt. They are never confident that they have received the grace of God in truth. They mean to be conscientious and punctual in the performance of all religious duties, and to seek and strive for greater light and confidence; but yet they live somewhat easy upon their feeble and slender hope of being the children of God. They are almost continually under what they consider the hidings of God's face, which strong as well as weak christians sometimes experience. I must not omit to observe,

4. That backsliding christians are weak and feeble minded. There are some sincere professors who lose their first love, neglect their first duties, and grow languid and dull in running the Christian course. Such instances are mentioned in scripture; and such instances are to be found at the present day. This may be owing, in many cases, to a change of circum-

stances, which lead the spiritually minded to become worldly minded, the strict to become lax, the serious to become vain, and the exemplary to become conformed to the spirit and manners of the world. The declension may take place in almost any stage of the Christian life; but more generally occurs in the early stage of it, among young and inexperienced converts, who are not well acquainted with the world, the men of the world, the things of the world, and the remaining depravity of their own hearts. Such persons are feeble minded while their stupidity continues; and after they awake, repent, and return to God, they cease to trust in their own hearts, and tremble in the view of the dangers of their pilgrimage state.

Now such feeble minded christians as have been described, are no visionary characters. The apostle often mentions such persons. He exhorts the Romans to receive him that is weak in the faith. He tells them that they ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. He commands the Thessalonians to comfort the feeble minded. And he sets them an example of this tenderness and compassion. He says, "To the weak, became I as weak, that I might gain the weak." It is probable that there are many more weak, than strong christians, at this day. This certainly seems strange at first view; but it does not destroy the evidence of the fact. We must believe this is true, though we should not be able to account for it. It is very easy, however, to discover and point out various causes, why many pious persons should be feeble minded, or weak in the faith. This leads me to consider,

II. How it comes to pass, that any who have experienced a saving change, should be such feeble minded persons as have been described. Among others, the following causes may be mentioned. And,

1. It may be owing to the want of instruction, that some are feeble minded. There are many persons who are deprived of religious instruction. Some in this gospel land are destitute of Bibles and of preaching; and yet God sees fit, by means of his providential dealings and private instructions, to awaken, convince and convert them. He causes them to see the plague of their own hearts, fastens a sense of guilt and self condemnation on their consciences, and disposes them to cast themselves upon divine mercy; and there leaves them in darkness and doubts. They are unacquainted with the scriptural signs of grace, and know not how to judge justly of their spiritual state. Others may sit under general and indiscriminating preaching, and seldom hear any thing said about experimental religion. The exercises of the heart under awakenings and convictions, and in the act of conversion, are rarely mentioned, or, if mentioned,

are never described. And how should those who sit under such preaching, be otherwise than feeble minded, in respect to their religious exercises? It is undoubtedly partly owing to the want of religious instructions, that a great many real christians make no more progress, and enjoy no more comfort, in their religious course. Though there are many religious instructers in this favored land, yet there is a great want of sentimental and experimental preaching, which is the occasion of there being not a few feeble minded christians.

2. It may be owing to wrong instructions, that some are feeble minded. They never hear the great and peculiar doctrines of the gospel clearly explained, and properly supported. But, on the other hand, they hear a great deal said against them, as unscriptural, unprofitable and dangerous. Not a few of those who profess to preach the gospel, deny the first principles of the oracles of God, and employ all their learning and ingenuity in opposing, and attempting to refute them. Though such preachers cannot prevent their hearers from becoming christians, and believing the doctrines they deny, yet they throw great difficulties in the way of their growing in knowledge and grace, and becoming strong in the faith. Though they do not embrace all the errors which they hear taught and inculcated, yet they very often embrace some, which weaken their faith in the precious truths that they do embrace. How many apparently good men will neither deny nor maintain the doctrine of decrees, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of reprobation, the doctrine of true submission, the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of instantaneous regeneration, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, nor the doctrine of saving grace as a due qualification for communion at the table of Christ. All such persons are weak in the faith. They see those doctrines of the gospel, as one saw "men as trees walking." And having such obscure and faint ideas of the doctrines of grace, they must be involved in darkness and uncertainty, in respect to the religious state of their minds. Having been taught to place religion in that in which it does not consist, they must be at a loss whether they have ever experienced a saving change or not. Though there may be some feeble, yet there are but very few strong and growing christians, who statedly sit under erroneous preaching.

3. It may be owing to a natural gloominess of mind, that some christians are weak in faith, and hope, and every Christian grace. Though they read a great deal in the Bible, and though they hear a great deal of plain, instructive and experimental preaching, and though they have a sound judgment, yet they love to look on the dark side of things, and cherish a despond-

ing disposition. Those who wish to live in fear, rather than in hope, and make themselves believe it is their duty to call their sincerity in question as often as they can, take a direct method to weaken their faith and hope, and every gracious affection. It is easy for gloomy persons to call up gloomy objects, and dwell upon those things, which tend to weaken their evidence of grace. They are so unduly afraid of being deceived, that they try to make themselves believe that all the light they have ever seen, and all the comfort they have ever enjoyed, was owing to some delusion. And when new views and feelings are experienced, they do all they can to repel them, and argue them away, and prevent them from giving light and hope. They adopt a mode of arguing which is very plausible. They say that there is an essential difference between true and false love, true and false faith, true and false repentance, and every Christian grace has its counterfeit, so that there is room to be deceived; and, according to scripture and observation, there is reason to fear that many have been deceived; it is possible, therefore, after all that they have experienced, they may be deceived. By this mode of reasoning from the possibility of deception, they keep themselves in perpetual darkness and doubt. There is great sophistry in this mode of reasoning in respect to themselves, but not in respect to others. It is always true, that it is possible they misjudge in respect to the goodness of others; but it is not always true, that they should misjudge in respect to their own gracious affections. As there is an essential difference between holy and unholy affections, so they may know this difference; and when they know this difference, and clearly see that their love is of the right kind, it is then impossible that they should be deceived. This may be clearly illustrated by the case of Judas and that of Peter. The eleven apostles thought that Judas was a good man till he betrayed his master, but they were deceived in respect to his sincerity. Peter, as well as the rest, was deceived with respect to him, and it was not possible that it should have been otherwise, so long as Judas conducted like a sincere christian. But it was impossible that Peter should be deceived in this respect, when he exercised supreme love to Christ, and could appeal to him and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." It would have been absurd then for Peter to put these questions to himself, Is it not possible that I am now deceived? Have not others been deceived? May not I, after all, be deceived? Such questions as these, would have been as absurd for Peter to ask himself, as to ask, "Am I not asleep, while I know I am awake?" Every real christian has the witness in himself of his sincerity, and when he loves Christ

supremely he may know it; and when he knows it, he has no right to wander in the wide, dark and boundless field of possibility. But some poor, gloomy christians have undoubtedly walked in this dark field, until their feeble faith has been swallowed up in vision. But it may be farther observed,

4. That it may be owing to the manner of their conversion, that some, who have experienced a saving change, are weak and feeble minded christians. Though regeneration is the same in all who experience it, yet the previous attendant and concomitant circumstances of it are often very various. Some are much longer under awakenings and convictions than others, before they are converted. Some have a much greater sense of danger than of guilt, before they are converted; and others a greater sense of guilt than of danger, before they are converted. Some are converted in the view of one divine truth, and some in view of another. Some are converted in the view of one part of the divine character, and some in the view of another. These various circumstances lay a foundation for a great diversity in the degrees of light and joy which attend genuine conversions. All the previous attendant and concomitant circumstances of regeneration which have been mentioned, never did, nor could, meet in the conversion of any particular person; so that there never was a perfect similarity in any two conversions. Now, not only young, but aged converts, are apt to judge of their own experiences by the experiences of others; and especially by the experiences of those whom they esteem the most judicious and pious christians. And this often proves an occasion of darkness and doubts to those who pay more attention to the circumstances of regeneration, than to the nature of it. But our Saviour has told us, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It remains to show,

III. That Christ is ready to receive and comfort all such penitent, broken hearted, feeble minded persons as have been described. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." In the sixty-first of Isaiah, he is predicted as saying of himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to comfort them that mourn; to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." This prediction he punctually fulfilled, while he preached and conversed among men. Once he said,

" Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." At another time he said, " All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And in the last day, that great day of the feast, he stood and cried, saying, " If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He feels the same tenderness and compassion towards the broken hearted and feeble minded now he is in heaven, as he did while he was here on earth. Since his ascension he says, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." These gracious and unlimited invitations to distressed, broken hearted penitents, give them the strongest assurance that Christ is ready to receive and comfort them, if they will only come to him, and cast themselves unreservedly upon his mercy. And this will farther appear, if we consider that Christ has thrown them into this dark, doubtful, distressing state, to prepare them for the more sensible and grateful reception of pardoning mercy and divine consolation. The longer and deeper sense they have of their guilt and wretchedness, the higher sense they will have of light and comfort when it is granted. It has been observed, that those whose conversion has been attended with peculiar darkness and doubts, have eventually made some of the brightest christians. Darkness prepares for light, despondency for hope, and humiliation for exaltation. The more effectually the stony heart is bruised, and the longer the sparks of grace are kindling into a flame, the more steady and lasting it may be expected the fire will burn. Whatever grows very gradually in nature's garden, generally grows longer than that which grows rapidly. And this, perhaps, holds equally true in respect to the trees of righteousness, which grow in the garden of grace. We are more frequently disappointed in regard to what are supposed to be clear, plain, sudden, surprising, and very joyful conversions, than in regard to conversions attended at first with less promising prospects. There is reason to think that Christ views with peculiar complacency those who have the deepest sense of unworthiness and ill desert, and come to him the most meekly, humbly, submissively and diffidently. Such, therefore, may be assured that Christ will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but bind up the broken hearted, strengthen the feeble minded, comfort them that mourn, and give them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the description which has been given of the feeble minded, that there is reason to think that many are converted sooner than they suppose they are. True converts generally date their conversion at some time when they found some peculiar light and joy. But a submission to divine sovereignty, or a willingness to be in the hands of God, generally takes place in the heart before sensible repentance, or faith, or joy, or hope. After the heart is changed, and its enmity is slain, and it becomes reconciled to God, it may be destitute of repentance, faith, joy, and expectation of heaven; and in this feeble, comfortless state it may remain some time, a long time, and we cannot say how long. Probably some are converted days, or weeks, or months, or years, before they entertain a hope of being renewed, sanctified and adopted into the family of God; and possibly some are in bondage, through fear of eternal death, all their days. The doubts of christians often arise from their not knowing the best marks of conversion in their favor. They consider joy as a better evidence of being converted, than submission, humiliation, godly sorrow, or a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. But that which is the most contrary to selfishness, is always the best mark of a change of heart; and what is more directly contrary to selfishness than submission, humiliation, godly sorrow, and every species of self denial? These are the peculiar marks which Christ has given of his true disciples. But these are not the marks which many preachers propose to their supposed converts, to try their sincerity by. They pronounce those to be converted, who have no other views and feelings than such as may arise from the most selfish heart. When they see sinners in deep distress under a sense of their guilty and perishing state, and then rejoice in the hope of escaping future misery, they are ready to pronounce them real converts; without inquiring whether they have seen the justice of the divine law, the amiable sovereignty of God, and felt a willingness that he should dispose of them, both in time and eternity. Such exercises of self denial and disinterested love to God, they are so far from representing as evidences of grace, that they pronounce them inconsistent with it. It is true that joy and rejoicing may flow from submission, repentance, faith and hope; but it is the submission, the repentance, the faith and humiliation, which are surer marks of conversion, than joy and rejoicing. Real converts, therefore, might find satisfactory evidence that their hearts are renewed, much sooner than they commonly do, if they would attend to the best evidence they have of being

born again. They really have the evidence of reconciliation to God, self condemnation, self abhorrence, godly sorrow, self abasement, self denial, and unreserved submission to God; and these are the best marks they can have, that they have passed from death unto life.

2. It appears from this description of the feeble minded, that men may easily think that they are converted, before they are. They may imagine they are feeble minded, while they are really stout hearted. They may be bowed down under a deep sense of their danger and guilt, walk softly, cry ardently to escape the wrath to come, and be willing to do any thing and every thing, except exercising supreme love and unlimited submission to God. While in this situation, they are often told, and are willing to believe, that they are doing all they can do and ought to do; that they are the bruised reed and smoking flax, and feeble minded, whom Christ is ready to receive and comfort. This fills them with joy, and they are pronounced converted. But they are like the way side, the stony ground, and thorny ground hearers, whom Christ represents as self deceived, and destitute of every mark of a sound conversion. They precipitately and presumptuously imagine they are converted before they are. They are like one and another who inconsiderately said that they would follow Christ, though they were not prepared to take up the cross and follow him. Or, they are like those who followed him for the sake of the loaves and fishes, whom he rejected and condemned.

None have a right to think they are converted, until they find some marks in them of pure, disinterested love, and real self denial, which are exercises diametrically opposite to every selfish affection. Search the Bible through, and you will not find a single mark of grace or vital piety, but what has the nature of disinterested love, and real self denial. And if you consult your own reason and conscience upon the subject, you cannot discover a single mark of saving grace in your hearts, which does not appear, to your own judgment, an exercise or action diametrically contrary to every species of selfishness. It is always owing to self deception, therefore, that any suppose they are converted before they are. They do not judge of their spiritual state by the marks of grace which Christ and other inspired teachers have given. They suffer their own selfish hearts, and erroneous teachers, to lead them astray. There have been, and still are, many erroneous teachers, who ignorantly teach for doctrines the opinions of men, which are directly opposed to, and subversive of, the doctrines and spirit of the gospel. A false hope is extremely dangerous, and all ought to guard themselves against it. Let those who are in doubt and darkness, exercise the strictest self examination.

3. If the feeble minded have been justly described, then it is very difficult to strengthen and comfort them. They are generally disposed to keep themselves in darkness and doubts, and refuse to be comforted. Their feebleness principally arises from ignorance; and it would be easy to remove their ignorance, if it were not voluntary ignorance. It would be easy to distinguish regeneration or a change of heart from all previous attendant and concomitant circumstances, in which it does not consist, and clearly show that it wholly consists in a change of heart from selfishness to pure, disinterested benevolence. There is no pure and holy love in the servile fear of punishment felt by the awakened. There is no pure, disinterested love in a sense of guilt, or mere conviction of sin. There is no pure, disinterested love, in seeking and striving to escape the wrath to come. There is no pure, disinterested love, in the joy which springs from the mere hope of future and eternal happiness. Regeneration, therefore, does not consist in any of these things, but in pure, disinterested love, which every real convert possesses. Why then does any such person doubt, and fear that he has not experienced a saving change? It must be owing to voluntary ignorance. He has been told, or been used to think, that it consists in something else. Though he has submission, he has no faith; or though he has submission, faith and hope, yet he has not such great joy as some converts have, and such as he supposes is necessary to remove doubts and create confidence of his good estate. Such feeble minded christians overlook and disregard the highest and best marks of saving grace, and wait in doubt and darkness for some better evidence of a saving change, than cordial reconciliation to God, unreserved submission to his will, godly sorrow for sin, self loathing, self abasement, supreme love to Christ, and a resolution to live a holy, obedient, self denied life. These scriptural marks of grace, they dare not depend upon; but imagine that some such things as have given others singular light, and joy, and hope, would remove all their doubts and fears, and give them complete satisfaction and confidence. But if the best scriptural marks of grace will not strengthen and comfort their feeble minds, it is impracticable to remove their voluntary ignorance, doubts and fears, by any human means. They refuse to be comforted by gospel motives, and seek for light where there is no light to be found, and pursue a course which commonly increases their darkness, and diminishes their exertions to grow in knowledge, and to do their duty. There is reason to fear that there are some who never will enjoy the consolations of the gospel, which they ought to enjoy, until their dying hour.

4. If the feeble mindedness of christians be generally owing

to the causes which have been mentioned, then it is of great importance that preachers should give proper directions to inquiring sinners, and feeble minded christians. If inquiring sinners are properly taught, they will not commonly think they are converted before they are, nor build their hopes upon any other than scriptural grounds, after they are converted. If they are properly taught the nature of total depravity, which renders all their desires, distresses, seekings and strivings, in their unrenewed state, unholy and unacceptable to God, then they will easily understand the nature of regeneration, which removes their total depravity, by changing their hearts from selfishness to benevolence, from hatred of God to love to him, from opposition to submission, from unbelief to a cordial belief and approbation of the gospel; and these new, holy, benevolent affections will appear to be the only and sufficient grounds of a solid hope of salvation. When they look into the gospel, they find that their new views and exercises are just such as Christ required of all his true followers. As long as these views and exercises continue, they enjoy peace and comfort, and are not troubled with doubts, and fears, and darkness, unless they find these views and feelings declining and languishing. And then their desires and prayers are, that their former views and feelings may be restored. They do not desire, nor expect, any other kind of evidence of their good estate, but that which arises from the scriptural marks of grace. But those who have been differently taught under awakenings and convictions, and have never been told that their hearts were totally depraved, but assured that their seekings and strivings were acceptable to God, and should they be converted, their conversion would consist in a joyful hope of salvation; are very liable to gain a false hope under such unscriptural instructions, and to form a false notion of regeneration, not only in respect to themselves, but in respect to others. And in case they are really regenerated, they will build their hope upon the weakest, and not the strongest evidence of conversion. It is, therefore, of great importance, that preachers of the gospel should give proper, scriptural directions to inquiring sinners, and desponding saints. And in order to do this, they must clearly delineate the true character of sinners, and the true character of saints, and the scriptural grounds of Christian hope. There are as many, and as great errors among those who are called experimental preachers, as among those who are called speculative, legal and superficial preachers. When people are taught the first and fundamental principles of the gospel, if they are awakened, they will be awakened in the view of truth; if they are convinced, they will be convinced in the view of truth; and if

they are converted, they will be converted in the view of truth. Of course, they will not be feeble minded, but strong in the faith. Or if their first love should languish, and they should fall into declension, there is a rallying point to which they may be more easily brought, reformed and reconverted. For real saints often need to be brought to that point in Christianity, from which they first derived their hope.

5. If the feeble minded be such as have been described, then there is reason to apprehend that the great deceiver uses all his art and subtlety to make and keep them feeble minded. He can suggest false grounds of doubt, and throw them into darkness and perplexity; which he knows will weaken and obstruct them in their Christian course, if not cause them to stumble and fall. He knows that darkness and doubts will obstruct their enjoying religion, or professing religion, or promoting religion, or opposing irreligion. When such feeble mindedness creeps into a church, it has the most unhappy and deplorable effects. This was exemplified from time to time in the Jewish church, in the seven churches of Asia, and is still exemplified in many of the churches of Christ at this day. But the feeble minded love to be so, and will either reject or abuse the proper means to strengthen and comfort them; which are the plain, important truths of the gospel. In the view and love of these, their doubts would vanish, and their hopes become strong and joyful. But the feeble minded are generally the most reluctant to hear and embrace the plain and heart searching doctrines, especially if their feebleness arises from forsaking God, and conforming to the world.

6. It appears from what has been said, that feeble minded christians are to be blamed, as well as pitied. They are certainly to be pitied, for they enjoy little, and suffer much, from their religion. The renovation of their hearts has rendered their consciences tender, spoiled them for the enjoyments of the world, and made them desire the spiritual comfort, which they at the same time refuse. They greatly injure themselves, and the cause of religion. For they lead the men of the world to think that religion is a gloomy, visionary and hateful thing, and never productive of that peace, serenity and joy which the scripture represents it to be. For this injurious effect they are responsible, because God has given them reason to rejoice, and required them to rejoice, and nothing but what is wrong in their hearts prevents them from rejoicing. But they are apt to pity, rather than blame themselves, and think that others ought to pity, rather than blame them. But whenever they get light, and enjoy peace, they will blame themselves.

SERMON XX.

THE MORAL IMPERFECTION OF CHRISTIANS THEIR GREATEST BURDEN.

O, WRETCHED man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ROMANS, vii. 24.

IT has been a question among expositors, whether the apostle, in this chapter, is speaking of himself or of some other man; and, if speaking of himself, whether he is speaking of himself as in a state of nature or in a state of grace. Whoever will read through the chapter with attention, can hardly doubt whether he is not speaking of himself, and expressing his views and feelings both before and after he had experienced a saving change. From the sixth to the fourteenth verse, he is evidently speaking of the exercises of his heart, while in a state of nature; and from the fourteenth verse to the end of the chapter, he is evidently speaking of his alternate exercises of right and wrong affections. For he speaks of his own moral imperfection just as other good men speak of their moral imperfection. Job acknowledges before God, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse." Solomon asserts, that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." It is very evident that the apostle, in the text, is speaking of himself as in a state of grace, and expresses the painful sense he had of his own moral imperfection. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Though he could sustain his infirmities, and even rejoice in tribulation, yet he was sometimes ready to sink under the burden of sin. This naturally leads us to inquire, why sin was so extremely burdensome to the apostle Paul. Here it may be observed,

1. That sin was very burdensome to him, because he was a subject of special grace. He was sanctified in part. He was a partaker of the divine nature. He imbibed the spirit of Christ. He had a pure, disinterested, impartial and universal love to all beings and creatures, which were capable of enjoying happiness, or suffering pain. He was holy as God is holy. And holiness in any being creates a perfect hatred and aversion to every species of iniquity. It is because God is perfectly holy, that he perfectly hates sin, and cannot look upon it but with absolute abhorrence. It was because Christ loved righteousness, that he hated and abhorred iniquity. And so if any man be holy as God is holy, and have the spirit of Christ, he will feel towards sin as God and Christ feel towards it; he will hate it with a perfect hatred. Paul was created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of God, and the same mind was in him, that was in Christ Jesus; he had therefore a perfect hatred to all sin, and especially his own sin. While in the exercise of holiness, he saw the criminality and turpitude of all the evil affections which were so apt to rise in his imperfectly sanctified heart, and they were extremely loathsome and burdensome to him. He could not forbear exclaiming, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" or from this dead body; speaking, as it is supposed, in allusion to a custom among the Romans, who sometimes put a criminal to death by fastening him to a dead body, till he was suffocated by its pollution and stench. So odious and detestable did Paul's sinful exercises appear to his pure and holy exercises. It is a burden to see, and much more so to be connected, with any hateful objects. And among all hateful objects, the holy apostle viewed sin as the most hateful to see and feel. And so did David. He says, "Mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. I am feeble and sore broken. I have roared by reason of the disquietude of my heart." Saints can bear any other burden more easily than the burden of sin, because it is so hateful to their holy feelings.

2. Sin was exceedingly burdensome to the holy apostle, because he had an enlightened and tender conscience. He was not only alarmed before his conversion, but made the subject of strong and genuine convictions. His conscience was effectually awakened to condemn the depravity of his heart. He was made to feel the heavy burden of guilt which he had contracted, and what an evil and bitter thing it was to violate the dictates of his conscience. Those christians who have had powerful and pungent convictions of conscience before their

hearts were renewed, are generally apt to have a more enlightened and tender conscience than others, afterwards. They never forget how they have felt under a sense of their own ill desert, and of God's just displeasure. Paul's convictions were probably very powerful and overwhelming; for they laid him prostrate in the dust, and shook his whole corporeal frame, and created an insupportable conflict between his corrupt heart and enlightened conscience. He deeply regretted that he disregarded the solemn and dying discourse of Stephen, and the great truths which he delivered. He deeply regretted the contempt he had poured upon Christ, and the gospel he preached. He deeply regretted his enmity to his harmless followers, his cruelly persecuting them, and making havoc of the church. Though, while he was doing these things, he verily thought he was doing God service, yet as soon as he was struck under sudden and pungent convictions, his conscience accused and condemned him, as acting a most stupid, obstinate and criminal part; and all his self confidence and self righteousness forsook him, and left him to feel the full weight of self condemnation. He felt the bitterness of spiritual death, and his giving up his hope was like giving up the ghost. Such clear and powerful convictions made an impression on his conscience, which he never could erase from his mind. His conscience, which had been so deeply wounded, was ever after extremely tender. Whenever he found his heart at variance with his conscience, it gave him a quick and painful sense of guilt. This rendered sin a continual and heavy burden. His conscience was not seared or hardened, but always alive and awake, to discern and condemn every unholy and sinful affection. He maintained an habitual spiritual warfare between his heart and conscience. Hence he said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." His tender conscience continually admonished him to keep his heart with all diligence, knowing that out of the heart are the issues of life. He was sensible that, if his heart were wrong, his actions proceeding from it would certainly be wrong; and whenever they were wrong, they were a burden to him, and created a self loathing and self condemnation, which was a spiritual conflict extremely heavy to bear.

3. His burden of sin and guilt was very great, because he made the divine law the rule of his duty. He did not mean to follow the false customs, and manners, and maxims of the men of the world, who lean to their own understandings, and trust in their own hearts, to direct them how to feel, and to act; but he made the law of God the infallible rule of his conduct. As soon as his carnal mind was slain by the divine law, he cor-

dially approved of it as a rule of life. "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law. — And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." He saw that the law is spiritual, but that he was carnal, sold under sin. He saw his heart in the glass of the divine law, which is exceeding broad, reaching to all the thoughts and intents of the heart, as well as to all the actions of life. This convinced him that the divine law condemned a thousand internal exercises and external actions, which the men of the world approve and applaud. He saw that every deviation from the divine commands, either in thought, word, or deed, was altogether and exceedingly sinful. He saw that just so far as he fell short of absolute perfection, he disobeyed God, and fell under the condemnation of the holy law of God, which he violated. He found, by comparing his heart with the divine law, it condemned him; and if his heart condemned him, God was greater than his heart, and knew all things, and must condemn him for much more than he condemned himself. The more holy the apostle was, the more he loved and delighted in the law of God after the inward man; and the more he loved the divine law, and made it the rule of duty, the more sensible he was of his numerous violations of it, and of the great criminality of violating it in the least degree. He knew his own heart better than the world knew it, and though the world saw little or no moral imperfection in him, he saw and groaned under a great deal of sin and guilt. And this is true of all, who sincerely desire to pay a universal and constant obedience to all the intimations of the divine will. When the commandment comes, and they compare their hearts with it, sin revives; they see more and more of their criminal imperfections and short comings in duty, which is a burden, and source of self condemnation and self loathing.

4. The apostle's sins were a heavy and distressing burden to him, because he had a clear and lively sense of their great aggravations. He saw his own sins to be far more aggravated than the same sins in others. He knew a vast deal more than other men and other christians. God had given him peculiar talents, privileges, and advantages to attain to high degrees in both human and divine knowledge; and he made great and rapid advances in mental improvements, both intellectual and

spiritual. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, where he studied Moses and the prophets, and their learned expositors, and the writings of the pagan historians, philosophers and poets, before his heart was changed. This prepared him, as soon as he was brought out of spiritual darkness into spiritual light, to gain clear and extensive views of the great plan of redemption, and of all the peculiar doctrines and duties of Christianity. He was, moreover, divinely inspired, and in vision carried to the third heaven, where he heard and saw the unutterable things of the invisible world. He knew far more than any other man then in the world, about God, about the Bible, about the church of Christ, about the depravity of mankind, and about the happy and the miserable spirits in heaven and in hell. These peculiar and discriminating favors the apostle habitually remembered, and ascribed to the astonishing grace of God towards him. His holy and grateful heart constrained him to say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am," and "less than the least of all saints;" that is, the most unworthy and ill deserving. Though he knew and said he was not behind the chief of the apostles in respect to holiness, he was less than the least of them in respect to guilt. He was sensible that his sins were attended with the most aggravating circumstances, because he had sinned directly against God, against Christ, against the Holy Spirit, against the friends and cause of Christ, and against the greatest and most distinguishing blessings of providence and grace. It grieved him to the heart, that he had hated God, whom he then loved; that he had persecuted Christ, whom he then loved; that he had made havoc of the church, which he then loved; and that he then carried about with him the remains of moral corruptions which he hated, and which he had solemnly resolved and professed to renounce. He viewed himself as the most sinful and inconsistent man in the world, because he sinned against the greatest light, the greatest love, and the most endearing obligations, by which God had bound him, and he had bound himself. And a deep and pungent sense of his aggravated guilt caused him to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death," whose weight is so insupportable?

5. Sin was a heavy burden to the apostle, because he desired and endeavored to restrain it. Sin is no burden to those who live in the habitual and allowed practice of sinning. The profane person, who indulges himself in profaneness, feels no burden of that sin lying upon him. The Sabbath breaker, who allows himself in profaning that holy day, feels no burden of that sin lying upon him. The worldling, whose habitual prac-

tice is to love and pursue the world and the things of the world, feels no burden of the sin of worldly mindedness lying upon him. While the great mass of mankind live as they list, and lay no restraint upon the corruptions of their hearts, they know nothing about that burden of sin which christians feel, who keep their hearts with all diligence, and lay a restraint upon every selfish and sinful exercise and affection. It is a burden to the christian, who means to renounce the world, to find his heart so often rising to a supreme affection to it. It is a burden to the christian, who desires and resolves to keep the Sabbath holy, to find his heart wandering on that day, like the fool's eyes, to the ends of the earth. It is a burden to the christian, who means to practice every religious duty and moral virtue, to find that he so often, either externally or internally, violates his own resolutions, vows and engagements. And this was the case of Paul, who meant to live soberly and righteously in this present evil world, and who laid a restraint upon all his external conduct and internal views and affections. He meant to covet no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, or any of the good things he enjoyed, but to keep himself unspotted from the world. But he acknowledges that he never arrived to that attainment. He says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He labored habitually and ardently to get rid of the burden of his moral imperfections, which he hated and condemned, as displeasing to God and injurious to himself.

6. Sin was extremely painful and burdensome to Paul, because it interrupted him in the performance of duty. He loved his duty, and felt himself under strong obligations to do all things whatsoever Christ had commanded him. He had a great many arduous, dangerous, and self denying duties to discharge. He was eminently the apostle of the Gentiles, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; which exposed him to the enmity and opposition of their false philosophers, idolatrous priests, and infatuated followers, who were often instigated to persecute him, by the unbelieving Jews every where scattered among them. Hear his own account of his labors, trials, dangers and sufferings, in the cause of Christ, which his enemies constrained him to give. "Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they minis-

ters of Christ? so am I. (I speak as a fool;) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Amidst this multiplicity of labors, trials and sufferings, he complains of his moral corruption as obstructing and preventing him from a constant discharge of his duty. He says, "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Sin was the only thing that prevented him from doing his duty constantly and perfectly, and therefore was a heavier burden than all the external labors and sufferings which he was called to experience. In tribulation he could rejoice; but to be obstructed and hindered in the discharge of his duty, was a burden too heavy to bear. It grieved his benevolent heart to think of neglecting his duty to God, to Christ, to christians, and to the souls of his fellow men.

7. Sin was extremely burdensome to Paul, because it interrupted his enjoyment of God. He loved God supremely, and delighted in his law, in his character, and in his government, while he exercised holy affections. He could say with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." While his heart was united with God, in calling upon his name and doing his will, he enjoyed that peace which the world could not give, nor take away. But when sin reigned in his heart, his views were obscured, his holy affections cooled, and his highest happiness destroyed. The world and the things of the world could not supply the place of God, and afford him any spiritual enjoyment. He found that there was no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness, and no communion between light and darkness. He found that just so far as he departed from God, God departed from him; and just so far as he grieved the Holy Spirit, he withdrew his gracious and comforting influence. And when he found himself sold under sin, he groaned, being burdened, and cried, "O wretched man that I

am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the more he grew in grace, and delighted in communion with God, the more he dreaded sin, which interrupted his holy affections, and his highest enjoyment of God. He was, therefore, like other christians, sometimes the most happy, and sometimes the most wretched of men.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the character and experience of Saint Paul, that there is an essential distinction between saints and sinners. This distinction does not consist in saints' being perfectly free from sin, while sinners are under the entire dominion of it. For saints are all more or less guilty of sin. Solomon declares that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." And the apostle John says in the name of christians, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It likewise appears from what has been said concerning Paul, that he was not wholly free from sin, and had not arrived at complete perfection in holiness. But though it be true that saints sin, as well as those who have never been renewed and sanctified, yet there is still an essential distinction between saints and sinners. The saint hates sin, but the sinner loves sin. Though the holy apostle often transgressed the law of love, yet he hated every transgression. All his sins were a burden to him. He hated and loathed every sinful exercise of his heart. But this is not the case of sinners. It gives them no self loathing or self condemnation, that they hate God, disobey his commands, and abuse his mercies. They take pleasure in walking in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes, without any restraint. It is true, they pursue different ways of sinning; but every way of the sinner seems right in his own eyes, and consequently his own way of sinning is a pleasure, and not a burden to him. In this respect, there is an essential difference between every saint and every sinner. Some sinners, indeed, maintain a fair exterior, and apparently conform to the precepts and prohibitions of the gospel as universally and constantly as real christians; and they take pleasure in their self righteousness, and feel no pain or burden that their hearts are far from God, and bound up in some worldly object or pursuit. But it grieves every real christian to discover that his heart has departed from God, and cleaved to the world. There is, therefore, as real and essential a difference between the lowest saint and the least sinner, as there is between the best saint and the worst sinner. When christians discover their own sins, they hate them; but

when sinners discover their own sins, they love them. When christians discover their own sins, they are a burden to them; but when sinners discover their own sins, they are no burden to them. It is true, sinners sometimes feel a guilt and regret at the painful consequences of their sins, but still they love them, and desire to continue in them, aside from their ill effects. There is, therefore, an essential distinction between all real christians and all unrenewed sinners; and, by this distinction, every person may know whether he is a saint or a sinner. If he hates all his own sins, he is a saint; but if he loves all his own sins, he is a sinner. Paul loved his own sins before he was converted, but hated them afterwards; and every sinner loves his own sins before he is converted, but hates them afterwards. Sin was no burden to Paul, before he was converted; but it was a great burden, afterwards. Sin is no burden to the sinner, before he is converted; but it is a burden afterwards, as long as he lives.

2. It appears from the character and experience of Paul, why all real christians are engaged in a spiritual warfare. They are but imperfectly holy. They have some right, and some wrong affections. Their hearts are divided between sin and holiness. This is true of the best christians in the world. Paul was undoubtedly the best christian in his day, if not in any day before or after him. And his affections were heterogeneous; some were holy and some were sinful. This he acknowledges and laments. Notwithstanding his high attainments in grace, he was subject to affections which were sinful and hateful; so that he said, "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I." Holy and unholy affections are diametrically opposite to each other, and never fail to create a conflict and warfare in the hearts of christians. This, the apostle tells believers, was not only his, but their case. He says to the Galatians, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." This spiritual warfare is between holiness and sin, and not between sin and conscience. Sinners often experience a warfare between sin and conscience; for their conscience often reproves and condemns them for their evil affections and actions. But it is peculiar to christians, to carry on a voluntary warfare between their holy and unholy feelings and conduct. They mean to stand upon their guard against all their spiritual enemies, and resist not only the evil suggestions of the great adversary, but every unholy and unsanctified affection. They watch and strive to keep their hearts with all diligence, because they know

that they are fickle and deceitful above all things, and not to be trusted. Though they know what their views and exercises are to-day, they know not what they may be to-morrow. They may, like Paul, intend well and resolve well, but to-morrow their good intentions and resolutions may forsake them, so that the good they would do, they will not do; but the evil they would not do, that they will do. They view the world, the men of the world, and the god of the world, as combined against them, and unless they are resisted and fought against, they will conquer them and lead them astray. Hence they feel constrained to be always prepared and armed to fight the good fight of faith, and watch unto prayer for divine grace and assistance.

3. It appears from the character and experience of Paul, that the moral imperfection of real christians is no just cause of their desponding, or doubting of their gracious state. It is essential to the Christian character, in this life, to be morally perfect and morally imperfect. Paul, in his best estate, had some holy and some unholy affections. He had not attained, neither accounted he himself already perfect, but groaned under his moral imperfections. He knew that by the grace of God he was a child of God. He knew that he really loved God and his Redeemer. He knew that he desired and labored to do his whole duty. But he knew that he was a froward and undutiful child of God, and often disobeyed and displeased his heavenly Father. But this did not lead him to despond, or doubt whether he knew the grace of God in truth. His holy love and obedience gave him positive and infallible evidence that he was renewed and sanctified; and his unruly affections and conduct were no counter evidence, to prove that he never did feel and conduct right. He did not expect absolute perfection in this life, and knew that it was not essential to his Christian character, and infallible title to the promises of the gospel. The gospel promises eternal life to every one that loves God, that repents of sin, that believes in Christ, that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that has passed from death unto life, and that has the least degree of true holiness. But the great adversary often employs the imperfections of true believers to perplex their minds, disturb their peace, weaken their hands and discourage their hearts, and plunge them into spiritual darkness and despondency. They ought not, therefore, to be ignorant of his devices, nor neglect to guard against his malignant influence. Christians have no more right to believe that they are insincere, without evidence, than they have to believe that they are sincere, without evidence. The caution to christians is, "Be not deceived." They have no right to deceive themselves, nor to be deceived by any deceiver. Paul did not call his good estate

in question because he was burdened with a sense of imperfection. And no real christian ought to doubt or despond because he feels the heavy burden of imperfection. His feeling such a burden is an evidence that he loves holiness and hates sin; that he loves his duty, and delights in the law of God after the inward man. If christians could not have hope so long as they remain imperfect, they could have no hope in this life. Let them keep their hearts right with God, and grow in grace, and this will afford them sure and positive evidence of their gracious estate, which the remains of moral corruption cannot destroy.

4. It appears from the character and experience of Paul, why christians must live by faith. It is because they have so much moral corruption remaining in their hearts, which is altogether criminal, and causes them to need daily the pardoning mercy of God. This renders it necessary that they should live by faith in the atoning blood of Christ. It was in the view of his daily imperfection that Paul constantly lived by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." And it is written in the prophets, "The just shall live by faith." All real, but imperfect christians find occasion, every day, to apply to the blood of sprinkling for pardon and cleansing. Though their criminal imperfection does not destroy their hopes, yet it destroys their peace, until they find peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. The best of christians find as much need, and are as much disposed, to live by faith, as the lowest or most imperfect christians. They cannot bear to live under the just displeasure of God, and therefore daily seek his pardoning mercy, and the light of his reconciled countenance. They are the most sensible of their imperfections, and most desirous that they may be blotted out, through the atonement of Christ.

5. It appears from the character and experience of Paul, that real christians never live in a state of spiritual death. Though they are imperfect, and their spiritual affections often decline and languish, yet they do not live like sinners, without a sense of the burden of sin. Paul felt and lamented every degree of his moral imperfection. He did not live from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, or from year to year, in a dead, torpid, unfeeling state, as some suppose that real christians may do. He was alive to his *sinful*, as well as *holy* exercises. While he had joy and peace in believing, he had pain and distress in disbelieving and disobeying. He did

not feel indifferent whether his heart were right or wrong with God. It is as inconsistent with the character of real christians to live habitually in a dead and secure state, as to live in a state of perfection, as some vainly and criminally profess to do. Paul did not live in such a state of sinless perfection, and there is but little reason to believe that any of the Methodists are more holy than was Paul. And there is no reason to think that real christians can live at ease in sin, any more than he could. There are undoubtedly some dead professors, who live, and feel, and act as the men of the world do; but they have no evidence that they are real christians, but positive evidence that they are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity.

6. It appears from the character and experience of the apostle Paul, that the more christians grow in grace, the more they will resemble, and find that they resemble him, in their religious character and spiritual experience. Young christians very often enjoy much comfort and peace in believing, and seem to imagine that they shall never feel such burdens and distresses from sin, as the apostle felt, and as older christians sometimes complain of. But if they live and grow in grace, watch over and restrain the corruption of their hearts, they will find the Christian warfare extremely painful and burdensome. When they find the world against them; and see the weakness and fickleness of their own hearts, which are bent to backsliding and easily carried away with the current of the times; their moral imperfections, and their undue attachment to the world in its various forms; they will then find abundant occasion for mourning, as well as rejoicing. Though they may not be troubled with doubts and fears respecting their gracious state, they will be burdened and troubled and distressed, on account of their great imperfections in external and internal duty. It is no evidence that christians are growing fast in grace, that they experience no more darkness and distress in their minds, but it is a greater evidence that they are declining in every gracious affection, and losing their first love.

7. This subject now calls upon all to inquire, whether they have that evidence of being good men, that Paul had of being a real christian. Have you any better evidence of being really gracious, than Paul had before his heart was changed? He then had that external evidence of being a good man, and in favor with God, which gave him entire satisfaction. And are there not many now building their hopes upon the same kind of evidence? They appear externally like Paul and other christians. But have they that internal evidence of being christians that he had, and other true believers have? Have you ever felt the burden of sin? Have you ever engaged in a spir-

itual warfare? Have you lived by faith in Christ, day by day? Has sin become a greater and greater burden? Are you more and more diligent to keep your hearts in the love of God? Does it give you pain to be interrupted in duty? Do you derive your highest happiness from the enjoyment of God, or from the enjoyment of the world? These are questions respecting views and feelings, that none can answer but yourselves. Others can answer for all your amiable external conduct, but not for any wrong feelings of heart.

8. This subject reproves and condemns those who make light of sin. It is the character of some sinners that they make a mock at sin, and they are called mockers. This is extreme folly and wickedness. The burden of sin is not a light burden to bear. It made the heart of Paul to stoop. He did not look upon sin as a light thing. God does not, Christ does not, saints do not, and the angels in heaven do not. And those who now make light of it, when the commandment comes home to their conscience will find it heavy. And it will sooner or later come home to every one's conscience. Let all sinners, then, prepare to meet God and their conscience, by true repentance, self abasement, godly sorrow, and a lively faith in the divine Redeemer. There is no room for delay. The burden of sin may now be taken off, but never will be taken off beyond the grave, but terminate in endless and insupportable despair.

SERMON XXI.

THE DISPERSION AT BABEL.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth
GENESIS, xi. 8.

SINCE the greatest part of the Bible is properly historical, we may justly conclude that history is not only entertaining, but useful. The scripture history of the world is the most ancient, as well as the most authentic. Profane history is altogether fabulous, which pretends to give an account of the world from Adam to Noah, and from Noah to Alexander. From that time downwards, the history of nations becomes more clear, just and authentic; but from that time upwards, the Bible is the only source of authentic information. This book, indeed, gives us a history of the world, from Adam to Noah, and then from Noah to Abraham and his descendants. The Bible history from Noah to Abraham is very concise, but extremely interesting. The Flood was an astonishing and important event. It reduced a world full of people to one single family of eight persons. From these all mankind since that memorable catastrophe have descended. The history of Noah's family is the history of all mankind in miniature. Could we know how they increased, when and where they spread over the face of the earth, we should have a general and comprehensive knowledge of all antiquity. And so far as the Bible will conduct us in searching for this useful knowledge, we may safely proceed. The words I have read, relate to the interesting event of the building of Babel, and the dispersion of those who were concerned in that impious design. "So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth." I shall

first inquire who those persons were; and then what were the most remarkable consequences of their dispersion.

I. Let us inquire who were dispersed over the face of the earth, at the destruction of Babel. This is a more difficult and important point to ascertain than some may imagine. It is generally supposed that they were the whole of mankind at that day; but, perhaps, in the course of our inquiry, we shall find this to be a mistake. We are told in the ninth chapter of this book of Genesis, that Noah lived after the Flood three hundred and fifty years. He was probably a very great, as well as good man. Of his goodness God himself testified, when he told him he had found him perfect in his generation. But mere goodness would not have qualified him for the great and extensive service which God assigned him. He was to be the preserver of the old, and father of the new world. He was to erect a stupendous building to preserve the human race in the Deluge. This was a work of art, as well as of time; and when he had preserved the world, he was also to be the guide and governor of it. It is therefore to be presumed that he was a man of extensive knowledge, as well as of eminent piety. Such a man must have had a great and powerful influence over all his posterity as long as he lived, and kept them in order, peace and harmony. And this is, probably, what the heathen poets allude to, when they celebrate the once golden age, as a time of universal justice, peace and prosperity. But if, during Noah's life, mankind lived in peace and prosperity, then it is reasonable to suppose they increased very fast. It is computed that a people, at this day, double in number once in twenty-five years. And according to this ratio of increase, the eight persons in Noah's family must have increased to above one hundred and thirty thousand, before he died. This number was too large to live comfortably together on the plains of Shinar, all the while he lived. This leads us to inquire when his family first began to disperse. It is natural to conclude that they would wish to live together as long as they could, or as long as Noah would permit them to do it.

If we now look back into the chapter preceding our text, we shall there find an account of a regular and general dispersion of Noah's family. The sacred historian first gives the genealogy of Japheth; and then says, "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations." He next gives the genealogy of Ham; and "these are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations." In the last place, he gives the genealogy of Shem; and among his posterity he mentions Peleg, in whose days the earth was

divided, and concludes by saying: "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations; and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood." This was certainly a general dispersion of mankind into the various parts of the world. And from the account here given of it, as well as from other accounts, it appears to have been a regular and peaceable dispersion. Hence we must conclude that it took place during the life of Noah, and under his direction, according to a divine appointment. This is intimated in several places of scripture. We read, Deuteronomy, xxxii. 8, 9: "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." This refers to the dispersion of mankind after the Flood, and represents God as allotting the places of the several nations in reference to Judea, the land of his chosen people. This agrees with what God says by Ezekiel. "Thus saith the Lord God, This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her." And Paul, speaking of the general dispersion of mankind, represents its taking place according to the will and direction of the Deity, "who hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." This plainly intimates that God appointed the time when, and the places where, mankind should be dispersed. The time was probably just before Noah's death. And this, Eusebius says, was the case. The places were these, according to the best accounts given us in history. The posterity of Japheth were sent into Europe; the posterity of Shem into Asia; and the posterity of Ham into Africa. The land of Judea was not divided among the nations, but reserved by God for his own use, to be given at a future time to his own people, the seed of Abraham.

But if this be a just account of the general dispersion of mankind which took place in the life time of Noah, and under his direction; the question will naturally arise, Who were those that lived on the plains of Shinar, built the tower of Babel, and were scattered over all the earth? It is evident they could not be the whole of mankind; for they had before been sent to the various places of their divine destination. Some had gone to one quarter of the world, and some to another. Who then could the builders of Babel be, that, after the general dispersion of mankind, were scattered over the earth? The scripture history will inform us upon this subject. They were the sons of

Ham; for the sacred historian tells us, "The sons of Ham were Cush, and Misraim, and Phut, and Canaan. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah, Sheba and Dedan. And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel." But how came Nimrod the son of Ham, and his posterity, at Babylon, where Babel was built? This portion of the earth was allotted to Shem; and Nimrod, with all the posterity of Ham, was appointed to go to Africa. What right then had Nimrod, or any of the sons of Ham, to take possession of the plains of Babylon? Undoubtedly they had no right at all. But this is the scripture account of the event. "The whole earth was of one language, and one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from the East, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto the heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they all have one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth." In the first verse in this account, it is said that the whole earth was of one language; and that as they journeyed, they found a place, &c. But the original word, translated *whole* or *all*, may be translated *every;* and the original word translated *earth*, may be translated *a land* or *province*. With this criticism, the two first verses may be read thus: "And every region was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass in the journeying of the people from the East, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar." The people, then, who journeyed from the east, were not all the people of the earth, but only the posterity of Ham, and especially Nimrod and his posterity. This is a very rational account. But it is absurd to suppose that the posterity of Noah, who consisted of an hundred and twenty or an hundred and thirty thousand, should all move in a body from the rich and fertile country around Mount Ararat, where they first set-

tled after the Flood, without any divine direction, or natural necessity. Hence it is natural to conclude that the people who journeyed from the East to the plain of Shinar, were Nimrod and his posterity. Especially when we reflect, it is expressly said that "the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel."

But how came Nimrod to pitch upon the plain of Shinar, after the general dispersion of mankind, and after he was directed to go into the parts of Africa, a country far distant from Babylon? To this I would answer, There seems to be no account given of his conduct, but the following. When the posterity of Shem and Japheth obeyed the divine direction to separate, and go to the places allotted them, the posterity of Ham, or at least Nimrod and his descendants, refused to obey the divine command. In open defiance to God, they moved from the East, and came to the pleasant land of Babylon, and there by force of arms, took the plain of Shinar out of the hands of the children of Shem. This is agreeable to the character of Nimrod; "he was a mighty hunter;" a man of a bold, enterprising spirit, and destitute of the fear of God and every principle of humanity. Having taken possession of this pleasant spot by violence, he viewed himself exposed to be molested by the posterity of Shem. And to guard himself, his family, and his followers, and to prevent being scattered any farther, he formed the scheme of building a great tower; at once to display his great strength, and to be a centre of union among his future offspring. This is agreeable to the account which the builders of Babel give of their design. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name," or as it may be rendered, a *mark* or *sign*, "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." They determined not to disperse, as God had required, and as the other branches of Noah's family had done. This shows that they built Babel in rebellion against God; and that God had just cause to come down and defeat their impious design, by confounding their language. What is to be understood by this, interpreters are divided in their opinion. Some suppose that the builders of Babel entirely lost their language, and had to get a new language in order to converse together. But others more naturally suppose that the confusion of language happened only to the builders of Babel; and that, by losing their pronunciation, until they were dispersed. This seems highly probable; for we find that different nations could converse together after the dispersion, without an interpreter. And it is supposed by many, that all the different languages now in the world may be accounted for, by those variations which would naturally arise from the dispersion of

mankind into different and distant countries. But be this as it may, it is very evident that the confusion of language happened only to the builders of Babel; and that these were the children of Ham, and especially in the line of Nimrod. It is not likely that all the children of Ham were concerned in the building of Babel; but it is more probable that Nimrod and his posterity, with some of the children of Shem, whom Nimrod subdued, were the only people who built Babel, and were scattered over all the face of the earth. At least, it seems very certain that the people who were scattered at the destruction of Babel, were not the whole of mankind, but only the children of Ham, and a few others who joined in their rebellion and shared in their punishment. I now proceed,

II. To inquire what were the most remarkable consequences of the dispersion of the children of Ham, at the destruction of Babel, and the confusion of language.

Nimrod and his posterity were mighty men. They were men of knowledge, as well as men of war. This appears from their taking the plain of Shinar out of the hands of the children of Shem, and building the tower of Babel. According to history, they were celebrated for agriculture, mathematics and astronomy. They were, in short, the most knowing and most powerful branch of Noah's family; that is, of all mankind. It is therefore natural to conclude that, being driven by the hand of Heaven from the plain of Shinar, and scattered abroad, there must have followed some remarkable and interesting consequences from such a great event. And here it may be observed,

1. That their dispersion was productive of *war*. They waged the first war after the Flood, in taking possession of Babylon. And after they were driven from thence, they maintained their rebellious and warlike spirit. They would not take their proper place among the nations according to God's appointment; but wandered about near Babylon, and infested the children of Shem in those parts. This excited the children of Shem to rise against them, and defend themselves. They succeeded, and laid these disturbers of peace under tribute. But they soon revolted and refused to pay tribute, which brought on, in about twelve years, another and more general war. The children of Shem, in various places, united together, and determined to destroy, or to disperse these rebellious children of Ham. This was the war we have an account of in the fourteenth of Genesis, in which four kings with five engaged in battle. In this war the children of Ham were obliged to flee; and, according to the divine determination, they were scattered over the face of all the earth. These giants, for so

they are called by both sacred and profane historians, dispersed far and wide into various parts of the world. Some went to Egypt. There they conquered the original inhabitants, and continued there about two hundred and fifty years; till at length the original inhabitants of Egypt rose, and drove them out of their country. And from Egypt they went to the land of Judea, and subdued the inhabitants, and took possession of that rich and fertile country. There they continued, until the children of Israel drove them out under the conduct of Joshua. From Judea they went to Greece, and violently took possession of it. There the main body remained, while small parties wandered over China, Africa, and almost every quarter of the world. But wherever they went, they went in a hostile manner; and, being expert in arts and in arms, they easily conquered those they called barbarians, and they called all nations but themselves so. Their course was every where marked with violence and cruelty.

2. This knowing and powerful people carried the arts and sciences with them, wherever they went. In these they excelled all other people. It was this people that did such wonders in Egypt. After they subjected the original inhabitants there, they employed them in all kinds of manufactures, and especially in building those astonishing pyramids; in cutting canals; in making the great lake Mœris; and in cultivating the extensive plains which were once a year overflowed by the Nile. Hence it came to pass that Egypt, after they left it, was so celebrated for arts and sciences. This was owing to the Cushites, who were dispersed at the destruction of Babel. They likewise carried the arts and sciences into Canaan, and from thence into Greece, and from thence into China, and into all other countries whither they directed their course. All the most ancient and astonishing works of magnificence, grandeur, ingenuity, and even utility, were performed by this powerful and ingenious people, whom Providence scattered over the face of the earth for our benefit, as well as for the benefit of mankind in general. Though they determined not to be scattered, yet they were the most scattered of any of the children of men. And notwithstanding their tyranny and cruelty, they did much to spread light and knowledge among the inhabitants of the earth. Of this, they have left astonishing monuments in almost all parts of the world.

But I must add,

3. That this learned and ingenious people were gross idolaters, and spread idolatry through all nations whom they subdued, and among whom they lived. They were the most corrupt and wicked part of Noah's family. When all the other

branches of his family submitted to the divine direction to disperse, they refused to submit. They went to Babylon in defiance to the true God. They set up the worship of the sun, the worship of fire, the worship of demons, or departed men, the worship of the dove that was sent out of the ark, and the worship of serpents, and other animals and reptiles. Such gross idolatry they carried into Egypt, into Canaan, and into all places whither they went. Noah was an eminently pious man, who undoubtedly instructed his posterity in the knowledge of the true God, and of the true religion, as long as he lived. And he lived three hundred and fifty years after the Flood, which was sometime after the first and general dispersion of his posterity. Accordingly, the children of Shem and of Japheth were worshippers of the true God after the first dispersion, and carried the true religion with them into the distant parts of the world, whither they went by divine direction. And it is to be presumed that the worship of the true God was maintained for a considerable time after the death of Noah, and the general dispersion of mankind. And had it not been for the particular dispersion of the sons of Ham at the destruction of Babel, the true religion might have been handed down through all succeeding generations. But the dispersion of this powerful, enlightened and idolatrous people, spread idolatry every where, and proved the unhappy occasion of corrupting the whole world. They set up their false deities, erected their idolatrous temples, and established the most absurd and abominable modes of worship. And taking advantage of the native depravity of the human heart, they easily destroyed the true religion, and spread the most absurd and demoralizing sentiments among all nations but one, and even that they well nigh destroyed by their artful modes of seduction. Such were some of the great, extensive and lasting consequences of the dispersion of the children of Ham, at the destruction of Babel, and confusion of language.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. This subject gives us reason to think that true religion prevailed and flourished for many years after the Flood. Every thing was suited to produce this happy effect. Noah was a man of piety, who was called to pass through scenes the most solemn and instructive. He saw the universal wickedness and stupidity of the world; and, as a preacher of righteousness, he solemnly warned them of the tremendous calamity coming upon them; but without effect. He visibly manifested his faith in the execution of the divine threatenings, by preparing an ark

of safety for himself, his family, and every species of living creatures. Just before the rains descended, and the flood came, Noah, with a heavy heart, took his leave of the world, and with his family entered into the ark; and the Lord shut him in. There he continued a hundred and fifty days. What a long season for solemn reflection on the obduracy of the human heart, and on the severity and mercy of God! Though he had lived nearly six hundred years, and observed much of the ways of God and of the ways of men, yet he probably learned more of God, more of himself, more of the worth of souls, and more of the vanity of the world, while shut up in the ark, than he ever learned before. There was one window in the ark, through which he could see the busy world six days before the Flood came. After that, he could see the rains descending, the waters increasing, multitudes flying every where for shelter, and undoubtedly he could hear some surrounding the ark, and with piercing cries pleading for admission into the only sanctuary or place of refuge upon the face of the earth. But God had shut him in, and all the rest of the world out. Though his heart melted with compassion for a sinking world, he could give them no relief. At length the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the waters covered the highest mountains, the cries of men were no more to be heard, an awful silence succeeded, and there was nothing to be heard or seen but a universal ocean. This he could not refrain from viewing and contemplating day after day, until it entirely subsided and disappeared. Must not such great, solemn and affecting objects have made deep impressions on the heart of any man, and especially on the heart of such a good man as Noah was? He was entirely disengaged from all worldly cares, concerns and interruptions. He had nothing to do but to contemplate on the present, reflect on the past, and anticipate the future. The sparing mercy of God towards him and his family, must have filled his heart with gratitude, and his mouth with praise. The awful destruction brought upon the unbelieving, impenitent, ungodly world, must have given him the deepest sense of the nature, malignity, and fatal consequences of sin, and of the holiness and justice of God in the everlasting ruin of his incorrigible enemies. These religious instructions and impressions he carried with him, when God allowed him to leave the ark, and resettle the world. Accordingly, we are told, "Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said, in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. While the earth remaineth,

seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Neither Noah, nor his family, could ever forget the solemn, instructive and affecting scenes through which they had passed, nor erase from their minds the deep impressions those scenes had made upon them. They would naturally relate to their children what they had seen, and heard, and felt, during the awful period of the Flood; and they again would relate the same things from one generation to another. While, at the same time, the astonishing effects of the Deluge every where to be seen, would continually admonish the rising generations to love and fear the God of their fathers, as the only thing that could secure his favor, and save them from his future and everlasting wrath. Agreeably to this supposition, we find that religion did continue and flourish, in some branches of Noah's family, a long time after he left the ark, and resettled the world. He lived three hundred and fifty years after the Flood, and had a supreme control over all the concerns of men, and especially over all their religious concerns. There can be no doubt, but that he promoted the cause of true religion as long as he continued in the world. And there is reason to believe that Shem and Japheth, and their families, were friendly to religion after his death. We find that several eminently pious men lived in those days; particularly Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Job, Abimelech and Jethro. These, and many other individuals probably maintained the true religion and the true worship of God several ages after Noah, notwithstanding the general prevalence of idolatry and false religion in the world. There was, however, but a glimmering of true religion among the nations of the earth from Abraham to Moses, when the children of Israel were formed into a visible church in the land of promise.

2. We learn from the scripture history of mankind which we have been considering, that infidelity has been the principal source of the wars and fightings that have deluged the world in blood. Nimrod was the first infidel in Noah's family, and the first who began and carried on an unjust and offensive war after the Flood. In direct rebellion against God, and without any injury or just provocation from the children of Shem, he waged war against them, and, by force of arms, took possession of the plain of Shinar which God had given them for their inheritance. And after God drove him from his usurped possession, he carried with him his destructive martial spirit, and kindled the flames of war among both the children of Shem and Japheth; and from thence he carried war into Egypt; and afterwards, he and his posterity carried war among every nation where they were scattered. These infidel giants were the enemies that Joshua had to combat and conquer, in order to

put the children of Israel into the possession of the land which God had given them. The religion of Moses forbade the people of God to wage offensive wars against any of the heathen nations, whom God himself had not *commanded* them to destroy. The religion of Christ has always had the same peaceful influence upon those who have professed to embrace it. While the Roman empire remained heathen, they carried war and desolation among all the nations whom they were able to conquer, for the sake of power and plunder. But after it became Christian, and Constantine possessed the supreme government of the empire, they professedly ceased to wage offensive wars. The truth is, that the enemies, and not the friends of true religion, have always been the principal disturbers of the peace of nations, and spread misery and destruction among the inhabitants of the world. Infidels have had the effrontery to charge christians with the guilt of fomenting wars, and spreading misery and desolation through the earth; but all history, sacred and profane, refutes this unjust and malignant reproach.

3. It appears from what has been said, that all false religion is only a corruption of the true. The true religion was revealed to Adam. It was preserved and kept alive until the days of Noah. He was a perfect and upright man, while the rest of the world apostatized from God and became totally corrupt. He understood, believed, and maintained religion, while in the ark, and after he resettled the world. His sons Shem and Japheth, and their children, believed and practiced true religion, until the children of Ham renounced the true God and true religion, and became idolaters. These gradually spread infidelity and every species of false religion among the other branches of Noah's family. But if true religion had not first been revealed and practiced, there is no reason to think that mankind, who are born like the wild ass's colt, and dead in trespasses and sins, would ever have thought of any such thing as any kind of religion. Though they are formed capable of knowing that the world must have been created, that the Creator of it must possess almighty power, perfect wisdom, and universal goodness, and therefore is worthy to be loved, feared and obeyed; yet they would not have gained this knowledge unless they had been first taught by God himself. This knowledge God taught Adam and the patriarchs, who conveyed it down to their posterity by mere tradition, without a divine written revelation, until the law was given by Moses at Mount Sinai. But this tradition was gradually corrupted, and became the source of all the false religions that were in the world till the law was given. And though this was given to the Jews, yet they, by their wars and intercourse with surrounding na-

tions, spread some knowledge of God and divine things among them, which prevented the total loss of all knowledge of God and religious worship. And the spread of Christian knowledge has had the same tendency, to prevent the heathen nations from becoming entirely destitute of all religious notions, and modes, and forms of religious worship. It is, therefore, clearly evident that all false religion is but a corruption of the true; and had it not been that God in various ways taught mankind, there would not have been religion of any kind in the world. Deists pretend that they have discovered natural religion, independently of all divine revelation, which is entirely rational, and free from the superstition, enthusiasm, idolatry, and all the errors of both heathens and christians. But all history, both sacred and profane, refutes their vain and false pretensions. They, as well as all the heathen world, are indebted to divine revelation for all their boasted knowledge of any religion, whether natural or traditional. The heathens are indebted to the Jews, and the deists are indebted to the christians, for all the knowledge they have of either natural, traditional or revealed religion. All that is true or important in Deism, Paganism, Mohammedanism, or any false religion, has been derived from the true revealed religion; which proves that all religious errors are but so many corruptions of religious revealed truth contained in the Bible.

4. It appears from what has been said, how much easier it is to spread any false religion in the world, than the true religion. A few bold, wicked, rebellious children of Ham, were the first corrupters of all nations of the earth, who had been educated in the true religion. Shem and Japheth were the most numerous, and best instructed branches of Noah's family, who had every advantage to maintain and preserve the true religion in the world; and had they been as zealous to promote it, as Nimrod and his followers were to corrupt it, they would have preserved and handed it down through all nations until the days of Abraham, and the time of Moses, when a written revelation was given. So that the name of *heathens* would never have been known in the world. But all men, like the Jews, were bent to backsliding; and loved error better than truth, and a false religion better than that revealed from heaven. The same love to errors and delusions still reigns in the hearts of both the heathen and Christian world; which renders it so extremely difficult to maintain true religion where it is known and professed, and to carry and establish it where it is not known. All the nations from Adam to this day, have always had opportunities of knowing God and the way to eternal life, if they had only loved light more than darkness, and truth more than error and falsehood, respecting divine and eternal

things. To this cause Christ ascribed the spiritual blindness and ignorance of mankind. By their feelings and conduct towards the gospel, they are every where proving the truth of that religion which they either deny or reject. They act out that depravity on which the gospel is founded, and which the gospel is designed to remove, and thereby demonstrate the necessity of divine revelation.

5. It is a strong evidence in favor of the religion contained in the Bible, that it has been so long preserved in the world, notwithstanding all mankind could do to destroy it. Every nation united their exertions against it, all the while it was preserved by tradition, which was till the days of Moses; when God planted his church in Judea, in the midst of the nations, who viewed it as a speckled bird, and flocked around it to destroy it, until the Christian church was erected; and ever since that day, Jews and Gentiles have been combined against it. But though the flames of persecution, from age to age, and from time to time, have been kindled around it, and threatened to destroy it, yet it has never been consumed. It still lives, and flourishes, and spreads. This is the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our eyes. For it is a visible evidence that it came at first from God, and has been preserved by his constant care and powerful protection. The friends of Zion have always had occasion to say to God, as David did: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth." Though other religions have been devised and propagated by the power of the sword and arm of government, yet they have died one after another; but the Christian religion has lived, and spread, and triumphed over all opposition; which cannot be accounted for by mere human means. It bears the stamp of a divine signature, and carries its own internal evidence with it to the understandings, and consciences, and hearts of all, who have candidly and impartially considered it. It is out of the power of learning, and reason, and criticism, to raise a solid objection against it.

6. We learn from what has been said, the deplorable state in which mankind in general have been involved for ages, and are still involved. A part of Europe, all Asia and Africa, and part of North and South America, are still sitting in the region and shadow of death, and perishing for the want of the gospel. About two thirds of the whole human race are now involved, either in the darkness of Paganism, Mohammedanism, Judaism,

or Popery, and destitute of a part, or the whole of the Bible. None of them have the free use of the New Testament, which plainly contains the gospel of divine grace, which is able to make men wise unto salvation. Though some, in some of these nations, have well cultivated minds and a large share of human knowledge, yet they either know not God, or have false conceptions of his nature, perfections and designs. They have no conceptions, or false conceptions, of the way of finding favor with God, and securing the salvation of their souls, which are infinitely precious. Though they feel pleased with their religious errors and delusions, and fondly hope they will secure their happiness in a future state, if there be such a state; and though they are without excuse for their moral blindness, ignorance and prejudices, yet they are to be pitied; for they are undoubtedly yet the nations that forget God, and must be cast off and perish, unless the gospel shall be carried to them, and they cordially embrace it. It is indeed a dark mystery, that God has suffered them so long to walk in their own way, without using such effectual means to enlighten and save them as he always has had power to use. But we have good reason to believe that he will yet bring light out of their darkness, holiness out of their blindness, and happiness out of their misery.

7. This subject shows the great reason that christians have to expect, desire and pray for, a better state of things in the world. They know that God has promised to give the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, to Christ for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession. They have reason to expect, therefore, that God will fulfil his promises to his Son, and bring all nations into cordial subjection to him. They have the same reason to desire, as to expect, that Christ will reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. For there is nothing but his reign, or the prevalence of his religion, that can remove the natural and moral evils which surround, depress and destroy the great majority of the human race. Neither civilization, nor learning, nor the arts of living, can meliorate the moral state of the world. These means have been tried in the most enlightened and refined parts of Europe and America, and failed of success. As nations have increased in these things, so they have sinned. Tyranny and oppression, wars and bloodshed, have prevailed as much in civilized, as in uncivilized nations, and produced as great natural and moral evils. Nothing but the pure gospel of Christ, has been an effectual remedy to reform, purify, and save any of the children of men. But so far as the gospel has had its genuine influence upon the hearts of men, it has never failed to transform them into the moral image of God, and prepare them to promote

peace, liberty, holiness and happiness, to the extent of their power. There is reason to expect that the gospel will sooner or later spread over all the earth, remove all tyranny and oppression, idolatry and delusions, and every species of vice and immorality, and cause this dark, depraved world to become holy, peaceful and happy. And is not this as much to be desired, as expected? And if to be desired and expected, is it not to be prayed for? Christ has taught all his disciples to pray for it daily, by sincerely praying to his Father, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But what will expectations, desires and prayers do, without correspondent exertions? All christians in every part of the world ought to exert themselves, to promote the melioration of the natural, moral and religious state of the ignorant, and deluded, and miserable nations, with whom they are surrounded and connected.

Our free, civilized, and gospelized nation has unhappily and sinfully been connected with the nations of Africa. We have, in violation of every humane and religious principle, traded in the souls of men, bought thousands and thousands of Africans, brought them from their native country to this, and here subjected them to the hardest labor, the meanest drudgery, and most absolute slavery. Their sighs and groans have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and cried for mercy and deliverance to themselves, if not for vengeance on their oppressors. Though none of us, perhaps, have been personally concerned in this great iniquity, yet our nation has been, and is concerned in it. We cannot excuse ourselves, if we do not openly disapprove of it, condemn it, and use all proper means to put an end to it. A scheme has been devised and a society formed, gradually to emancipate those who were once held in bondage, but have been freed, and are desirous of being transported back to their native country, relatives and friends, with a view to enlighten and civilize others, and to put a final stop to the slave trade on the African coast. This is a most humane and benevolent design; and it is hoped it will be approved and promoted by individuals at present, and soon by the national legislature. Realizing the freedom, the civilization, and the blessings of the gospel, which we have long and fully enjoyed, can we forbear to throw in our mite, to promote such a humane, important and benevolent purpose? If the design be accomplished, it will give the fairest opening and prospect of not only breaking the rod of oppressors, but of spreading the glorious gospel among a large portion of the human race who are perishing in their ignorance and guilt; while it will wipe off a foul blot from our national honor, humanity and religion. These are motives which must sink deeply in every benevolent heart.

SERMON XXII.

THE HOPELESS STATE OF THE HEATHEN.

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God
Psalm ix. 17.

The time was, when all the nations of the earth knew and acknowledged the only living and true God. This time, however, was of short duration. The nations were soon divided and scattered over the four quarters of the globe. Soon after their separation from each other, they lost their religious traditions, grew vain in their imaginations, and degenerated into all kinds of idolatry. The true religion would have become entirely extinct, had not God selected one nation from all the rest, and given them a written and standing revelation. Of this nation David was both a king and a prophet. As the king of God's peculiar people, he viewed all the heathen nations as his personal enemies; and as a prophet of the true church, he viewed all the heathen nations as enemies to the true God and the true religion. Hence it is, that he so often blends his enemies with the enemies of God, and speaks of both as exposed to both temporal and eternal ruin. This mode of speaking runs through this psalm. He begins with praising God for the overthrow of his enemies. "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. When mine enemies are turned back they shall fall and perish at thy presence. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause: thou sattest in the throne judging right. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked." From God's past conduct, he proceeds,

under the influence of a true prophetic spirit, to foretell his future conduct towards the wicked, and especially the heathen, whom he considered as such. "The heathen are sunk down into the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken." It follows in the next verse but one, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." This is not a mere threatening, but a plain prediction; and therefore the veracity of God stands pledged to fulfil it. The prediction is, that all the finally wicked shall be destroyed, and among these, all nations that forget God. This is a description of all the heathen world, who are destitute of divine revelation. For it was common among the Jews, as well as among us, to call all nations heathen who were left to the mere light of nature. It is true that in David's day all nations were heathen except the Jews; but now, by the heathen, we mean only those nations who never enjoyed the gospel. To these nations the prediction in the text still extends, and assures us that it is God's fixed determination to destroy them, as well as the unbelievers of the gospel. The text contains this solemn truth,

That all the heathen will finally perish.

Since this is a subject upon which both the learned and unlearned differ in their opinions, I shall endeavor to treat it as thoroughly and plainly as I can. To make it appear that the heathen will be finally lost, I would observe,

1. That God, many years ago, gave them up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. The first heathen nations might have known God, but they chose to forget him. And from this circumstance they are justly called, The nations that forget God. The first families and nations after the Deluge, were instructed by their pious progenitors in the knowledge of God, and of true religion. And it is highly probable that when the nations were divided, and sent to the various parts of the earth to which God directed them, there were some pious and intelligent persons in each nation, who would have gladly instructed them, if they had been willing to receive divine instruction. But the body of each nation chose to forget and forsake their Creator, and sink into a state of gross ignorance and impiety. This was highly displeasing to God; and for this he gave them up to judicial blindness and stupidity. Paul, speaking of the heathen, says, "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind." And Paul and Barnabas both say, "God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." Both these passages plainly imply that the heathen had then long been given up to judicial blindness. And it seems natural to conclude that this

heavy curse fell upon them at the time of the calling of Abraham. As all the nations had then become idolaters, so they then deserved to be given up; and as God's peculiar covenant with Abraham included all religious privileges, so it seemed to cut off all nations from those peculiar blessings. At that time, however, or soon after, God actually withheld the means of grace from the heathen world. He did not speak to them by dreams, or visions, or face to face, as he did to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their posterity. And when God withheld all special communications from the heathen nations, then they were certainly devoted to ruin. In this forlorn condition the heathen nations have been, for more than four thousand years. God has left them to walk in their own ways, without sending them angels, or prophets, or Christ, or apostles, or ministers, to teach the way of salvation. He has denied them the means of grace, and therefore there is reason to conclude that he never will make them the subjects of his grace, until he sends them the gospel. He has declared, by his word and providence, that he has given them up to judicial blindness and ignorance, which plainly implies that they, with the rest of the finally wicked, shall be turned into hell.

2. When God formed the seed of Abraham into a distinct nation and visible church, he shut the door against the heathen nations. At Mount Sinai, God avouched the Israelites to be his people; and they avouched him to be their God, and promised to pay a universal obedience to his commands. By some of these commands he separated them from all intercourse with the heathen nations; forbidding them to make treaties, or intermarriages with them, or to follow any of their peculiar customs and manners. They might neither worship their gods, nor eat, nor drink in their temples, nor at their tables. They were directed to consider all the heathen world, or all nations but their own, as out of the pale of the church, and out of the favor of God. And this is confirmed by the very permission which God gave to the heathen to become Jews; that is, to become circumcised, to live among the Jews, and to unite with them in their modes of religious worship. God declared that Jerusalem was the only place where men could worship acceptably; and by this, excommunicated the whole heathen world. When God erected Israel into a visible church, he virtually excluded all other nations from it. But can we suppose that God would excommunicate all the heathen nations from the privileges of the true church, if he did not mean to cast them off for ever? Why should he expressly separate those on earth, whom he intended to unite in heaven? All the heathen nations are properly outcasts; and so long as God continues them in this

situation, there is no reason to think that he means to save them. The present heathen nations are as ignorant and wicked as the ancient heathen nations were; and there is no more reason to imagine that the present heathen nations, as such, will be saved, than that those ancient heathen nations were; but, on the other hand, that as the ancient heathens were destroyed, so the present heathen nations will meet with the same awful doom.

3. When God sent Christ into the world to bring life and immortality to light, he directed him to preach to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles. Hence we read, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." By his own are meant his own people, the Jews. They were God's peculiar people, in distinction from all the heathen nations; and they alone God meant to favor with the means of grace, which he had denied to all the heathen, whom he had given up to destruction. Upon this ground Christ himself declares, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Though he preached to many cities and villages in Judea, yet he never went to the Gentiles. And no reason can be given for this, but that God meant to leave the heathen in their ignorant and perishing condition. It was a prevailing opinion in our Saviour's day, that "salvation is of the Jews;" that is, confined to them. Nor did Christ contradict this opinion, though he predicted that the Gentiles should, in some future time, worship the true God in spirit and in truth. His whole conduct and preaching carried the idea that God did not design to bestow his grace, where he denied the means of grace.

4. When God sent the apostles to preach to heathens, he sent them to turn them from heathenism to Christianity. They durst not go to the Gentiles, till they were expressly and divinely directed to go. They looked upon them as given over to ruin, and supposed that God intended to destroy them without remedy. When Cornelius, the Gentile, sent for Peter to preach to him, he durst not go until he received a vision from God, in which he was commanded to go. And though he was successful in preaching, yet his brethren blamed him for his conduct, until he convinced them that God had meant to save some of the Gentiles. For this purpose, Peter and Paul, and the other apostles, were sent to the heathen. This, Paul declares with respect to his own mission. He says, when Christ converted him he addressed him in these terms: "Rise, and stand on thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles,

unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." This commission plainly implies that the heathen, to whom Paul was sent, were in a state of condemnation, and exposed to endless destruction. It was a great mystery to Paul and others, until it was revealed that salvation should be extended to the Gentiles. Hence he says to the Ephesians, "For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery — which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto us the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. — Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." It was also a great mystery to the Jewish converts that the apostle should preach to the Gentiles, and that with success. The church at Jerusalem were astonished, when Peter told them of his success at the house of Cornelius. When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Paul and Barnabas related their success among the Gentiles to the church at Antioch, as a matter of admiration. "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that the Lord had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles." And Peter mentions it to the council at Jerusalem, as something very extraordinary, that he should be appointed to preach the gospel to Gentiles, in order to their salvation. "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among you, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." Thus the apostles declare that they were sent to the heathen, that they might believe and be saved; which implies that without the gospel they were perishing for lack of knowledge. And, indeed, the apostle Paul expressly tells the believers at Ephesus, that before the gospel came to them, they were in a state of total ignorance and despair. "Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth

of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Now if the heathen nations were in a perishing condition in the days of the apostles, they are in the same condition at this day. For all the nations whom the gospel has not reached, are still without Christ, without God, and without hope in the world. And if the apostles had a right to believe and say that the heathens would perish without the light of the gospel, then we have the same right to believe and say that those who still live and die without the gospel, will be turned into hell.

5. God has told us that he intends to convert all the heathen nations, and that he intends to do it by the instrumentality of the gospel. God promised to Abraham that in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed. God said to Christ, in the second Psalm, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." God said to his ancient church by Isaiah, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." The angel said to the shepherds, at Christ's birth, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Simeon said, when he took Christ into his arms, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Paul, speaking to the believing Gentiles concerning the unbelieving Jews, says, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid; but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness, in part, is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: And so all Israel shall be saved." It appears, from these passages of scripture, that God intends to convert all the heathen nations in some future period. He has already cast away the Jews, in order to convert Gentiles; and he will call them in again, to answer the same purpose. The time is coming when all nations shall be converted. But this great and desirable event is to be brought about by the instrumentality of the gospel. This is plainly and repeatedly predicted in the scripture. Paul, speaking upon this subject declares, "There is no difference

between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?—So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If all nations are ever converted, it must be by the spread of the gospel, and the diffusion of divine knowledge. Hence the universal spread of the gospel is connected with the universal conversion of the heathen nations, in the Revelation of John. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Thus it appears that so long as God withholds the gospel from the heathen nations, so long they will remain in a perishing condition, and there can be no hope of their salvation.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God will not save the heathen who are destitute of the gospel, then we have no reason to think he will save the Jews, while they disbelieve the gospel. The Gentiles were given up for rejecting the true knowledge of God, and the Jews were broken off for rejecting the true knowledge of Christ. And so long as they continue to reject Christ, as the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world, there is no reason to think that God will show mercy to them. Though they have uniformly and tenaciously maintained their belief in the divine inspiration and authority of the Old Testament; though they profess to believe and obey the laws of Moses; though they do externally obey those laws, as the Scribes and Pharisees did; yet this affords no good evidence that God will accept their services, and save them from suffering that eternal death which they deserve, and from which he cannot consistently save them on any other ground than the atonement of Christ. We are constrained to believe this, by what Christ expressly said to them on this subject: "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." The Jews, ever since their dispersion, have been more or less of them mixed with Christian, as well as with heathen nations, and have had opportunities of hearing and reading the gospel, and of examining the arguments by which Christian writers maintain the divinity of Christ and the fundamental truths of the gospel; but this is no excuse, but a great aggravation of their unbelief of the gospel. It demonstrates that they both see and hate both Christ and his Father;

which is a tenfold aggravation of their obstinate infidelity. So Christ said of their fathers: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." Though the Jews were once addicted to idolatry, yet, ever since their captivity in Babylon, they have become more bigoted to their own religion than any other nation in the world. They have generally rejected Deism, and almost universally rejected Heathenism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity; and amidst all the national revolutions in which they have been involved for ages, they have rigidly adhered to Judaism. They are more opposed to Christianity than to any other religion; just as the heathen are more opposed to their religion than to any other which is not so unsocial. If the Jews were not extremely blind and obstinate, it seems as though they would readily believe the gospel; for they have the law in their hands, which was designed and calculated to be a school master to bring men to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. Both the moral and ceremonial law show the necessity of an atonement for sin, and the moral impossibility of sinners' being saved without their renouncing their self righteousness, and relying alone upon the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. Paul told the Jews that they must perish if they rejected Christ. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." There is no reason to believe that God will now, any more than in the apostle's day, save the Jews, so long as they abide in unbelief of the gospel.

2. If God will not save the heathen, who are destitute of the gospel, then we have no reason to believe that he will save atheists, deists, and those who deny the fundamental principles of Christianity. There have been some men in the world who have called themselves atheists, and have been called so by others. They have openly denied that there is an eternal, self existent Being, who has created, upholds and governs all things in the natural and moral world. They have not only denied the existence of the only living and true God, but employed their learning and ingenuity to disprove his existence. There have been many men in the Christian world, who have acknowledged the being of God, but denied the inspiration and authenticity of the Bible. These have been called deists. Among these, there have been men of celebrity for learning and talents, which they have often displayed in their infidel

writings. And there is another and more numerous class of men among nominal christians, who profess to believe the existence of the Deity, and the inspiration of the scriptures, but deny many, if not all of the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the gospel. These are called by the orthodox, heretics. It must be acknowledged that some atheists, some deists, and some heretics, exhibit a fair moral character, superior talents, great erudition, and are extensively useful in civil society. But can we suppose that God will give up the terms of salvation, which he has proposed in the gospel, in favor of such men, any more than we can suppose that he will give up the terms of salvation in favor of learned and virtuous heathens? The heathen are undoubtedly as sincere in their idolatrous notions, as atheists, deists, and other erroneous men are in their heretical, and unscriptural, and absurd opinions. Atheists, deists, and heretics are far more criminal than heathens; for they resist greater light, violate stronger obligations, and exercise greater enmity and opposition to God, to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, and to the highest good of the universe, than heathens do, or can do, in their dark and unenlightened condition. Accordingly, the apostle expressly declares that such as become atheists, deists, and heretics under the full blaze of the gospel light, shall be doomed with heathens to endless punishment. He says: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." If the ignorance of the heathen, who know not God, will not save them from future and everlasting punishment; much less will the knowledge of infidels and heretics save them from the same fearful doom. There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby any can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. No other foundation can any man lay than that which God has laid in Christ, for the salvation of sinners; and whoever build on any other foundation, will find it will fail, and involve them in hopeless ruin. To deny the fundamental principles of the gospel in any way, is inseparably connected with eternal destruction.

3. If God will not save the heathen, who are ignorant of the gospel, then we have no reason to imagine that he will save any under the gospel, merely on the ground of their external obedience, morality or virtue. There is reason to fear that there are a great many under the light of the gospel who are whited sepulchres, and who appear beautiful unto men and unto themselves, whose hearts are far from God, and totally unrecon-

ciled to his character, and opposed to the humiliating terms of salvation; who yet hope and expect to be saved by their good works. But why should God save them for their mere good works, rather than Socrates, or Seneca, or Plato, or Cato, or Cicero, or any other amiable, virtuous heathens? Or why should God save them for their exterior virtues and obedience, rather than the young man in the gospel, who had kept externally all the divine commands; or Paul, who as touching external obedience to the law, was blameless? I know that some say that Peter taught a different doctrine when he said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." Peter said this in respect to Cornelius, a Roman officer, who actually embraced the gospel. And Paul made the observation in respect to other heathens who embrace the gospel; "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." God will save all believers in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles; but he will save no others, however beautiful and amiable they may appear in their mere external conduct. Men may do a thousand amiable, virtuous actions, while they have not the love of God in them, and while they are total enemies to the cross of Christ; and their amiable and virtuous conduct may create that self righteousness and self dependence which is the greatest obstacle to their cordially submitting to God, and relying on Christ alone for pardoning mercy. "For the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Many seem to think they are christians, because they have had Christian parents, have had a Christian education, and have lived in a Christian land; just as the Jews thought they were the people of God and were interested in his gracious covenant, because they were of the seed of Abraham, had been circumcised at eight days old, and had outwardly conformed to the laws of Moses; though they were inwardly enemies to the God of Israel. Paul says that he built his hopes of heaven on this false and sandy foundation; and his own deception led him to warn others against it. He tells his brethren, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." There is not, perhaps, a more common and dangerous practical opinion among the better sort of sinners, than a belief that they gain pardon and acceptance with God by their good desires, good prayers, and good deeds, while they retain all the deprav-

ity of their hearts, and live wholly to themselves, and not to God. And they hold this deception fast, and will not let it go, though they are so often and plainly told it will destroy them.

4. If God has cast off hitherto, and will continue to cast off all the heathen nations so long as they remain heathens; then he has given, and will continue to give, most clear and awful displays of his amiable sovereignty in the dispensations of his grace. Those who deny his sovereignty in personal election to eternal life, freely and fully acknowledge his sovereignty in national election to national privileges and advantages. They allow that God granted great national favors to the Jews, which he denied to other nations, and, among these favors, his holy oracles, and peculiar religious institutions and instructions. By bestowing these national favors upon the Jews, he gave them an opportunity of obtaining eternal life; and, by denying these favors to the heathen nations, he deprived them of an opportunity of securing the salvation of their souls. So that this national election and reprobation was inseparably connected with personal election and reprobation, and equally displayed the absolute sovereignty of God in the dispensations of grace. Accordingly, the apostle, in the ninth of Romans, represents this national election and reprobation as inseparably connected with personal election and reprobation. Speaking of Rebecca, the mother of Esau and Jacob, he says, "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth: It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to

destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" All Arminian expositors employ this remarkable passage of scripture to explain away the doctrine of personal election and divine sovereignty. They say the election here mentioned is national election, and not personal election. It is granted that the apostle mentions national election; but only for the purpose of illustrating and proving personal election and divine sovereignty. And the argument is conclusive. For the national election of the Jews to their peculiar religious as well as civil privileges, necessarily implied their personal election; and the reprobation or exclusion of the Gentiles from the national privileges of the Jews, necessarily implied their personal reprobation, or exclusion from the kingdom of heaven. God elected the Jews to the means of salvation; but reprobated the Gentiles to the means of destruction. And the consequence has been to the elected Jews, that some of them have been saved; and the consequence has been to the reprobated Gentiles, that none of them, in their Gentile state, have been saved. This is a most awful and glorious display of divine *sovereignty* in the dispensations of grace. God has for ages personally elected about one third of mankind, and personally reprobated more than two thirds to ignorance, stupidity, impenitence, and endless destruction. But notwithstanding God has given such clear and visible evidence of personal election and reprobation, by his word, and by the dispensations of his providence and grace, yet Methodists, Arminians, and multitudes of others, presume to call the great and fundamental doctrine of personal election and reprobation, *blasphemy*. Though God has told them in his word, and confirmed it by his providence, that all the heathen nations are in a state of reprobation, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world, and strangers to the promises of grace, yet under this full blaze of light, they call one of the first principles of the oracles of God, blasphemy. This is a demonstration how little God and the Bible are known, even in the Christian world.

5. If God has suffered and still suffers all the heathen nations to walk in their own way, and to live and die in the region of darkness and shadow of death, without the means of grace, and the offers and hopes of salvation; is it not strange that those who call themselves christians, and with the Bible in their hands, should still believe that all mankind will be saved? It seems that they must disbelieve the history, the predictions, the promises, the threatenings, and express declarations of the Bible, in order to believe the doctrine of universal salvation. Nor is this all; for it seems that they must disbelieve what they

actually see and know of the present state of both the Christian and Heathen world. The present state of this sinful and miserable world exhibits infallible evidence that all mankind will not be for ever happy in the world to come. So Peter argued from the past and present state of the world. He says, "If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly — the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." This perfectly agrees with the declaration in the text: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

6. It appears from what has been said, that the heathen are in a deplorable and perishing condition. They have forgotten God; they are sitting in the region and shadow of death; God has denied them the means of grace and the offers of salvation; and declared that while they continued in the ignorance of heathenism, they shall be turned into hell and perish for ever. This is the awful condition of not only a few individuals of mankind, but of whole nations and kingdoms, yea, of more than two thirds of the whole human race, who are now probationers for eternity. Is there nothing to be done, or can too much be done, to enlighten these immortal souls that are ready to perish? On whom does this labor devolve? It certainly devolves upon the enlightened Christian world whom God has chosen to the means of salvation. It is in their power to be workers together with God, in fulfilling his gracious promises to Christ and to his church, that the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. These heathen nations are to be found in Europe, Asia, Africa and America; and it particularly devolves upon Europeans to enlighten the European, Asiatic and African heathens, and upon American christians to enlighten American heathens. Wisdom and benevolence require us to exert ourselves to the utmost, to enlighten and gospelize the heathen nations on our borders; and to spare no pains nor expense to spread divine knowledge among them, both by the Bible, and the preachers of the gospel. Much is doing, and more must be done.

7. If the heathen are in a deplorable condition, how much more deplorable is the condition of the impenitent and unbelieving in this enlightened age and enlightened land! God has

chosen them to the most important external privileges and favors that he ever has chosen, or can choose to bestow on any nation in the world. The religious privileges which he granted to the Jews, were the greatest in kind that he ever bestowed upon them, by which he distinguished them from all the other nations of the earth. So the apostle expressly declares. He asks and answers this question: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." The same oracles, with the addition of the whole New Testament, have been given to our nation, in distinction from the whole heathen world. Here God has been constantly pouring divine instructions into the minds of all who have been willing to read, or hear the gospel. How then can any of us complain of the doctrine of national and personal election? He has actually chosen us to the great and infinitely important privileges of both. He has brought the kingdom of heaven as near to us as he can bring it, and invited, and commanded us to come in, and partake of all the spiritual and eternal blessings contained in it. How criminal and inexcusable must any of us be, if we neglect so great salvation! Must not any finally impenitent and unbelieving sinner in this land and in this place, be far more criminal and inexcusable than any heathen in Tyre, or Sidon, or Nineveh, or Sodom and Gomorrah, or in Asia, Europe, Africa, or America; and deserve a heavier doom?

SERMON XXIII.

THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? — Romans, xi. 15.

The rejection of the Jews for their rejecting the gospel was a deplorable event. It deeply affected the heart of the apostle, who sincerely lamented their sad condition. But there were three things which afforded him some consolation in the view of it. The first was, that they were not all cast away. The second was, that their rejection was the occasion of spreading the gospel among the Gentiles. And the third was, that they should be, in some future period, called in, and made instrumental of enlarging the church of Christ. This last ground of consolation is mentioned in the text. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" This plainly intimates,

That the calling in of the Jews will be productive of great and happy effects. I shall,

I. Show that the Jews will be called in; and

II. Mention some of the great and happy effects which will flow from this event.

I. I am to show that the Jews will be called in. God has dispersed them all over the world, and therefore his calling them in must imply, not only the taking away of the veil from their hearts, and causing them to embrace the gospel, but also his restoring them to their own land. These two things are intimately connected together, and cannot be separated any more than means and ends, cause and effect. That they shall thus be prepared for, and finally be gathered into their native land, will clearly appear from the following considerations.

1. This event is plainly and repeatedly foretold in the scriptures of truth. The apostle, in the text and context, mentions the restoration of the Jews. He demands "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" And he goes on to say, "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest you should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness, in part, is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy." The apostle here argues the restoration of the Jews, upon the ground of the promise to Abraham, and represents it to be as certain, that the Jews should, in some future period, embrace the gospel, as that the Gentiles already had embraced it; or in other words, that it is as certain the Jews shall be called in, as that they have been cut off. If we now look back into the Old Testament, we shall find that the prophets, who foretold the dispersion of the Jews, have as plainly predicted their future conversion and restoration. In the twenty-seventh chapter of Isaiah, we read, "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come, which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." We find a prediction similar to this in the eleventh chapter of Ezekiel. "Thus saith the Lord God; although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and

I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Another plain prediction of this event we find in the first chapter of Hosea. "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured, nor numbered: and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel," or seed of God. The restoration of the Jews is still more literally foretold by the prophet Amos. By him God says, "I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; and they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled out of their land, which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." The prophet Zechariah not only predicts the return of the Jews to their own land, but also describes the purity of their worship after their return. He says, "Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited — Yea, every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." These are very few of the many predictions of the prophets, concerning the future conversion and restoration of the Jews. I might cite many more passages, and even chapters, in favor of the Jews' being called in; but those I have read are sufficient to establish the point, so far as predictions unfulfilled can establish it.

2. The remarkable preservation of the Jews in their state of dispersion, confirms the predictions which have been cited, and affords a strong presumptive evidence of their future restoration. They have been scattered among all nations for almost two thousand years, and yet remain a distinct people, totally unconnected with all others in their modes of living, and rites of worship. This cannot be accounted for by the common principles of human nature, nor by the example of any other nation in the world. All other conquered nations have, in time, lost their laws, their customs, their manners and their religion, and become blended with their conquerors. Hence the preservation of the Jews for so many ages, and in so many parts of the

world, as a distinct nation, must be ascribed to the peculiar care of Providence. For some reason or other, God has preserved and distinguished the seed of Abraham amidst all the wars and revolutions in the world. And what other reason can be assigned for this singular interposition of Providence, but the divine purpose of restoring them to their native land? This, indeed, is a good reason why they should be preserved, and kept from mingling with any other nation. In this view, they have been, ever since their dispersion, a standing monument of the truth of God in his predictions, and of the faithfulness of God in his promise to Abraham. His extraordinary conduct towards this people for more than eighteen hundred years past, has been an ocular demonstration to the world, that he intends to collect them into one body, and lead them back to the land of their nativity. And this is farther confirmed,

3. By their peculiar circumstances, as well as by their past preservation. They never have been permitted to own any particular country, or to establish any particular government, but always have been subjected to the laws and revolutions of the nations among whom they have been dispersed. And though they have generally enjoyed the temporal blessing of Abraham, yet their wealth has always consisted in personal and not in landed property. So that they have no partial attachment to any particular place, or people, or government; but constantly stand ready to march to Judea, whenever Providence shall open the way for their return to the land of their fathers' sepulchres. They are now as completely prepared to return from every place and nation where they live, as they were to return from their Babylonish captivity in the days of Ezra. And they are waiting and longing for the promised Messiah to appear at their head, and lead them in triumph to their native land. Whenever, therefore, God shall take the veil from their hearts, and cause them to look upon him whom their fathers pierced with a believing and penitent eye, they will undoubtedly confide in the promise to Abraham, and form a strong and irresistible resolution to surmount all obstacles, and force their way through all nations to the land of promise. This, the predictions, the promises, and the providence of God, all conspire to put beyond doubt. I now proceed to mention,

II. Some of the great and happy effects which will flow from this event. Though we are in a great measure ignorant of the ways and means by which God will gather his ancient people from the various and distant places of their dispersion, and conduct them to their own land, which is now inhabited by their most inveterate and inhuman enemies; yet we must conclude that this extraordinary event cannot be brought about without producing great and happy effects. It must certainly

make a very sensible impression upon all the nations from which they are taken; and indeed, upon all other nations, who will necessarily become acquainted with such a signal interposition of Providence. Besides, we must suppose that God will answer some important purposes, by means of their conversion and restoration; for he always has made them instrumental of carrying into effect his wise and gracious designs. Here then it may be observed,

1. That the restoration of the Jews to their own land, will greatly confirm the truth of divine revelation. There are more particular and express predictions concerning the restoration of the Jews, than concerning any other event foretold in the Old and New Testament. And whenever this event shall take place, it will be more easy to discern the agreement between the predictions and their accomplishment, than it has been in any other case whatever. It will be an ocular accomplishment, and such as all men, whether learned or unlearned, are equally able to understand. With regard to the fulfilment of many divine predictions, wise and good men differ in opinion; some supposing there has been, and others supposing there has not been an accomplishment of them. But when the Jews shall be actually called in and put into possession of Judea, all men will be united in the belief that this great and astonishing event is a complete fulfilment of all the predictions respecting the seed of Abraham. The nature of this event, the long time it had been predicted, the multitude of predictions respecting it, and the great and numerous obstacles in the way of bringing it to pass, will all serve to confirm the truth of prophecy, and the inspiration of the whole canon of scripture. This event will unite the testimony of all nations and all events, for two thousand years together, in favor of divine revelation. It will strike learned and unlearned infidels dumb in every part of the world where the Jews had resided, and from which they shall be taken and carried to the holy land where Christ was crucified, and where the gospel of his grace was first published. Nor will this event give less evidence of the truth of Christianity to Mohammedans, than to infidels. It must carry conviction to all men that the Bible is the word of God, and Christianity the only true and divine religion. In this view, the restoration of the Jews is a most desirable event; and it may become still more important before it takes place, by reason of the great spread of infidelity among the nations called Christian. It is not improbable that the Jews will be converted and restored at the very time that infidelity shall rise to its height, and threaten the entire extinction of Christianity. How happy for the world will it be, if the restoration of the Jews should silence atheists, deists, and all descriptions of infidels, and es-

tablish the truth of divine revelation in the minds of all unbelievers!

2. The restoration of the Jews will not only confirm the truth of divine revelation, but awaken all nations from their long infatuation and stupidity, and fix their attention on the great realities of the future and eternal world. This is more than intimated by the apostle, who says, "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" According to this lively representation, the restoration of the Jews shall have a greater tendency to convert mankind to Christianity, than their dispersion had. And we know that their dispersion broke down the middle wall of partition between them and the Gentile world, and opened the way for spreading the gospel far and wide among other nations. The same effect, but in a greater degree, shall be produced, the apostle tells us, by their restoration. As their dispersion was a means of reconciling the world to God, so their restoration shall be a greater means of enlightening and converting sinners among all nations. Their conversion and restoration shall be like life from the dead to those sitting in the regions of the shadow of death. And this may be greatly owing to the methods God may employ to bring about their restoration. It is supposed by many that he will convert them to the belief and love of the gospel in the places where they are dispersed, before he collects them together, and conducts them to Jerusalem, where they formerly celebrated divine ordinances. And should this be the case, their views, and feelings, and character, and faith in the promises, must have a powerful tendency to awaken the attention of all nations to the being, perfections, laws and government of God, and to the gospel of Christ. Should they return to their own country mourning and rejoicing, they will solemnly reprove the infidelity, stupidity and criminality of the gospelized world. The prophet Zechariah represents them as returning in this manner, and producing this great and happy effect. "Thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain. Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country, and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that

God is with you." Besides, it is thought God will not only pour out his Spirit upon his people, and bring them to embrace the gospel, before he carries them to Judea, but that he will conduct them thither by a series of great and signal dispensations of providence. And should he do this, it will have a powerful tendency to alarm the world, and convince them of the reality and importance of true religion, and serve to raise multitudes from spiritual death to spiritual life. This leads me to observe,

3. That the conversion and restoration of the Jews will have a direct and happy tendency to bring on the latter day glory. There is abundant evidence in scripture that the time is coming when the gospel shall spread, and the kingdom of Christ shall extend through all the earth. God has promised to give unto Christ "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." God says by Isaiah, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." Daniel, in explaining Nebuchadnezzar's dream, says, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." John tells us that when the seventh angel sounded, "there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." And again he says, "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled." Upon these predictions, and such as these, there is good ground to believe that Satan shall be bound, and Christ shall reign a thousand years, and that the world, during that long period, shall become not only nominal, but real christians. And since this glorious day will be brought on by the instrumentality of men and means, there is reason to think the conversion and restoration of the Jews will prepare the way for it. It is highly probable that their conversion and restoration will be one of the last steps God will take to promote universal peace and prosperity in the Christian church. It is easy to see how the conversion and return of the Jews will in many ways facilitate the universal spread of the gospel. And there is no doubt they will be as much engaged to spread the gospel, as they

ever had been to oppose it. They may be the means of throwing much light upon both the Old and New Testament, not only in respect to divine predictions, but in respect to many difficulties which have puzzled not only the enemies, but the friends of divine revelation. The same changes and revolutions which will prepare the way for their return, will equally prepare the way for carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth. Their return, therefore, the apostle represents as the fulness of the Gentiles, who will then be united with them; and so all Israel shall be saved; that is, the whole number of God's elect, who are his spiritual Israel. These are some of the great and happy effects of the conversion and restoration of the Jews. And if these should be produced by the calling in of that long lost people, their conversion to the gospel will be more beneficial to the cause of Christ, than their opposition to it has been detrimental. Their return will be emphatically like life from the dead, to the stupid, unbelieving, perishing world.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said concerning the restoration of the Jews, that there is a growing evidence in favor of the divine inspiration of the scriptures. Many of us can remember the time when the Bible was almost universally allowed to be the word of God, and given by divine inspiration; but of late years, not a few have risen up who profess to disbelieve the divinity of the scriptures, and freely call them a cunningly devised fable. But it seems to be too late in the day to disbelieve and dispute the divine authority of the Bible, which has stood the test of both the learned and the unlearned world for ages; and especially, since the evidences of its divinity have been constantly and rapidly increasing, by the fulfilling of prophecies. It must be allowed that miracles and prophecies are the two highest kinds of external evidence that can be given in favor of divine inspiration. God gave both these kinds of credentials to those whom he employed to write the Bible, and to deliver his messages to mankind. The evidence of miracles has ceased; but the evidence of prophecy has been continued and increased, from the day that God foretold that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, to the present time. Through this long period of nearly six thousand years, the fulfilling of divine predictions has been continually accumulating new and higher evidences of the truth and authenticity of the Bible; or that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." A great many of their predictions have been

actually and visibly fulfilled. The prediction concerning the Deluge has been fulfilled. The prediction concerning Jacob and his family's going into Egypt, has been fulfilled. The prediction concerning the destruction of the king of Egypt, and the return of the children of Israel to Canaan, has been fulfilled. The prediction of the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes of Israel, has been fulfilled. The prediction of the captivity of the two tribes in Babylon, and their return at the end of seventy years, has been fulfilled. The numerous predictions of the coming, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, have been fulfilled. Christ's predictions concerning the spread of the gospel, the destruction of the temple, the cutting off and dispersion of the Jews, have been, and still are fulfilling. The prediction concerning the Ishmaelites, has been, and still is fulfilling. The predictions of the utter extinction of the seven churches of Asia, have been fulfilled. The predictions concerning the rise and fall of the Mohammedans, and the predictions concerning the rise and fall of the Man of sin, have been and still are fulfilling. These are some of the most important events that ever have taken place, or ever will take place, from the beginning to the end of time. They have been intimately connected, as causes and effects of one another, and at the same time connected with all other events that have not been foretold, and that might, for aught the prophets knew, defeat their predictions. The prophets, who foretold these events, lived in different parts, and in different ages of the world, so that they could not combine together to form a scheme to deceive mankind. The accomplishment, therefore, of their predictions concerning such distant, numerous and important events, amounts to a moral demonstration that they were divinely inspired. The evidence of miracles in favor of the divine inspiration of the scriptures, is continually decreasing; but the evidence arising from the fulfilment of prophecies is continually increasing, and will continue to grow stronger and stronger till all the predictions in the Bible are completely fulfilled. If we look into the Bible and read the predictions there, and then look into sacred and profane history and read the fulfilment and fulfilling of them there, the evidence in favor of the divine inspiration of the scriptures must appear irresistible. There is no reasoning against fact. The burden of proof lies on those who call in question the inspiration of the sacred oracles. It would be a Herculean labor for any one to undertake to prove that there was no such man as Abraham, who is mentioned in profane, as well as sacred history; or to prove that his seed did not once possess the land of Canaan; or to prove that they did not build a magnificent temple, which was once destroyed and rebuilt; or to

prove that Jerusalem was not destroyed by Titus; or that the Jews are not still dispersed all over the world; or that Christ was not crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; or that his professed followers did not propagate his religion; or that Papists and Mohammedans have not opposed and persecuted them. But until these facts are disproved, the evidences that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, must stand in their full and irresistible force. And if they need any farther corroborating support, it is continually increasing by the present state of Mohammedans, Ishmaelites, Jews and Christians.

2. The sovereignty of God appears as plainly from his conduct towards his peculiar people, as from his declarations in his word. His sovereignty consists in giving and denying temporal and spiritual favors to whom he pleases. He claims a right to do what he will with his own. He claims a right to give temporal favors to one, and not to another, and to give spiritual blessings to one, and not to another, and to soften the heart of one, and to harden the heart of another. Such declarations of his amiable and awful sovereignty we find every where in his word. But many endeavor to explain away these declarations of his sovereignty, as being inconsistent with his moral rectitude, and the essential perfections of his nature. There would, indeed, be great plausibility in giving such a construction to his claims of absolute sovereignty, if he had never acted it out. But it appears from the whole history of his conduct towards Abraham and his posterity, that he exercised the most absolute sovereignty towards them. He promised to give to Abraham and to his seed such temporal and spiritual blessings as he denied to mankind in general. In Abraham's family, he preferred Isaac to Ishmael. In Isaac's family, he preferred Jacob to Esau. Moses was preferred to Aaron in his father's family. In the twelve tribes, Judah and Benjamin were preferred before the other ten tribes. And taking the whole nation together, how often did God, for ages, destroy kings and kingdoms, to promote their temporal and spiritual peace, safety and prosperity. He distinguished them, in all these respects, from every other nation on the face of the earth. And though for a long time past he has scattered them through the world, and subjected them to the scorn, derision and tyranny of other nations; yet he has exercised a particular providence over them, by which they are preparing, in time to come, to stand again as his peculiar people at the head of the religious world. God's conduct towards his people Israel, illustrates and establishes his sovereignty, not only in national, but personal election and reprobation. This appears from what the apostle says in the ninth of Romans. "For the children being not yet born, neither having

done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Those who deny the doctrine of personal election and reprobation, acknowledge the doctrine of national election and reprobation. But the apostle supposed this to be inconsistent; for he makes use of the doctrine of national election and reprobation to prove the doctrine of personal election and reprobation; and he proves both doctrines from the conduct of God towards Abraham and his seed. And we know that God did in fact soften the hearts of Moses, Aaron, and other pious Israelites, while he hardened the hearts of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; and that he softened the hearts of Caleb and Joshua, while he hardened the hearts of the Canaanites, and of many Israelites that fell in the wilderness. There is not a plainer truth in the Bible than this, that God not only professes to act, but does act, as an absolute sovereign in bestowing and denying temporal favors, and in softening and hardening the hearts of men.

3. If the Jews shall be called in, and their restoration shall produce such great and happy effects as have been mentioned, then we may safely conclude that God is as really promoting the prosperity of the church in general, at one time as at another. Zion has often thought that her God had forsaken her; and the children of Zion very often imagine that God is not only slow, but negligent, in carrying into effect his gracious designs towards the church. But God, by all his apparently retrograde movements, is actually promoting the great interests of his kingdom as fast as possible. He was as really fulfilling his promise to Abraham while his seed were four hundred years in bondage, as while he was pouring down his blessings upon them in the land of promise. God has as constantly and irresistibly carried on his cause since the casting away of the Jews, as before; since the rise of Mohammed and the Man of sin, as before; and since the prevalence of the grossest errors and delusions in the Christian world, as before. God is never slack,

as men count slackness, in carrying into effect the great purposes of his grace. God promotes the fruitfulness of the earth by cold as well as by heat, by darkness as well as by light; just so he promotes the prosperity of the church, by all the opposition made to its growth and enlargement. By all past errors, delusions, idolatries and infidelity among Jews and Gentiles, God has been preparing the way, as fast as possible, for the conversion and restoration of the Jews, and for the conversion of all nations to the belief and love of the gospel, and for the ruin of his incorrigible enemies. They have been saying and are still saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The methods which God is employing to promote his gracious designs, are as well suited to try the hearts of saints, as the hearts of sinners. The darkness and the light which now attend the operations of divine providence, have a direct tendency to awaken the hopes and fears of both the friends and enemies of Christ. Accordingly, we find an uncommon zeal and exertion on both sides. This zeal and exertion will probably rise to a much higher degree, to prepare the way for the conversion and restoration of the Jews, for the destruction of their enemies, and for the suppression of all opposition to the cause of truth. The friends of Christ have no just ground to murmur or despond at the apparently slow movements of the wheels of providence, nor his enemies to hope and triumph. In due time, the Jews will be restored and converted, the gospel will spread and prevail, errors and delusions will be detected and destroyed, and the enemies of all righteousness will either embrace the truth, or perish in their strong delusions.

4. If the Jews shall be called in, then we cannot expect any long settled peace among the nations of the earth, till that great event shall take place. It cannot be brought about in an ordinary way, without disturbing the peace and harmony of all nations where they principally reside, and through whom they must make their way to Judea, which is in the possession of the Mohammedans, who are very numerous and powerful. They are equal enemies to Jews and christians, and firmly attached to their strong and pleasing delusions. No moral means will have the least tendency to convince them of their errors, or dispose them to embrace Christianity. They will risk their lives before they will give up their religion and government, which are inseparably connected. It would require an immensely numerous and powerful army to subdue them, if they should stand alone; but they undoubtedly would, if they found it necessary, call in the assistance of other deluded, idolatrous nations. All false religions can unite against the true.

It is not to be supposed that the Mohammedans can be conquered, without spreading war and desolation among the whole Eastern world. And should a general war break out there, it would directly or indirectly affect all Europe, if not America. It will require great convulsions and revolutions in the Christian, as well as in the Heathen world, to purge them of their errors and delusions in theory and practice. There must be a vast deal of hay and stubble burnt up, before the primitive purity of Christianity can be introduced into the nominal churches of Christ. But they will be more loath to give up error than truth. There is no just ground to expect that the Jews will be called in, and the Millennium will be brought on, by the mild means of mere moral motives. God has commonly protected, built up, and enlarged his church, by employing the sword to destroy its enemies. His people made their way to the land of Canaan by the force of arms, and took possession of it by destroying and subduing the original inhabitants of it. The reformation from Popery was brought about by long and bloody wars in the states of Germany; and the churches in this country owe their origin, their preservation and enlargement, to a series of wars and revolutions among christians and heathens. God has always seen it necessary to promote his own cause by the dreadful means of wars and fightings. And there is every reason to expect that he will still continue to employ these means to answer the same purpose, till all the hostile nations of the earth lay down their arms, and cease to oppose the kingdom of the Prince of peace. Though some suppose the Millennium has already commenced, and will soon be peaceably ushered in, yet their opinion does not appear to be well founded upon any thing God has said in his word, or has done in his providence. Wars and rumors of wars are still sounding in our ears; and in respect to those nations in particular, who will probably destroy one another to prepare the way for the restoration of the Jews. It concerns the friends of God to prepare for the fiery trials that may await them.

5. It appears from what has been said, that we have as much reason to believe the Jews will be eventually restored to their native country, as they had to believe the coming, incarnation, sufferings and death of Christ, before his appearance in the flesh. There was a multitude of plain predictions in the Old Testament concerning the person, life and death of Christ, which the Jews ought to have believed before he appeared, and especially after he had appeared, suffered and died. But there are as many plain predictions, both in the Old and New Testament, concerning the restoration of the Jews after their long dispersion. And there are no more apparent difficulties in the way of their returning to their native land, than there were in

the way of Christ's coming into the world. But christians have been very unbelieving in respect to their return. Their unbelief of that remote event has become proverbial. If we hear any one say that such or such event will not take place till the Jews come, we understand him to mean that such an event never will come to pass. Such unbelief of the plain and numerous predictions of the conversion and restoration of the Jews, has led Christian nations to despise and abuse that ancient and once venerable nation. This feeling and conduct is a species of infidelity, highly reproachful to those who profess to believe the Bible, in which there are such great and precious promises in favor of God's peculiar people. It is true, they deserve to be despised and neglected, for their despising and neglecting the heathen so long, and viewing themselves as the only nation worthy of the notice and favor of God. Even the apostles, at first, supposed the gospel was sent exclusively to the Jews, and that salvation was of the Jews only. But this is no excuse for Gentile christians, who neglect, despise and abuse them almost every where. But,

6. Since God has plainly told us that he intends to deliver them from their low and depressed state, and carry them back to their native land, and put them into the possession of all the privileges and blessings of the gospel, we ought to desire and do all we can to bring about that great and happy event. We believe that the gospel makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile, and that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. It appears from what has been said, that their conversion and restoration will be a rich and extensive blessing to the world, and like life from the dead to us, as well as to them. It is, therefore, a most important and desirable event. Paul viewed it in this light. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." He says again, "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. — For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy." We are much indebted to the Jews, who prepared the way for the coming, incarnation, and atoning death of Christ, and for spreading the gospel far and wide by the apostles, who were descendants of the Hebrews,

the seed of Abraham. We have received unspeakable benefits from their being for a while cast away, and are promised still greater benefits from their predicted restoration. We ought sincerely to desire this great and glorious event, and to unite in our exertions with those who are forming societies and using means to bring it to pass. The Christian nations at the present day seem to have a greater tenderness for the Turks than for the Jews, and are unwilling to disturb them, for the sake of delivering the Jews from their despotic and cruel hands. But this is probably a work which they ought to do, and are destined to do. There is no ground to expect the restoration of the Jews, without the aid and assistance of the Christian world. And if the Jews are to be restored before the commencement of the Millennium, it is time for christians to be awake, and alive to the great and arduous work they have to do, and to prepare themselves for it. And they will not prepare themselves for it, until they attend to, and believe the divine predictions concerning God's peculiar, chosen and beloved people, who are groaning for deliverance from the cruelty and oppression of an ungrateful and unbelieving world.

Finally, This subject teaches us the indispensable obligation we are under to believe, and love, and obey the sacred oracles, which the Jews so long preserved, and at length conveyed to us Gentiles, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. The apostle asks, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" He replies, "Much, every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." These we have more fully and completely in our hands, than the Jews ever had. By these we are highly favored above the Jews, who have only the Old Testament in their hands; and above all the pagan world, who are totally destitute of divine revelation, and perishing for the lack of knowledge. Our obligations to embrace the gospel are as great as the blessings which are promised to all who do embrace it. Those who disbelieve and reject the gospel, not only forfeit all the blessings it offers to their choice, but expose themselves to an aggravated condemnation, for resisting the light and force of divine truth, which renders them far more guilty than the unenlightened heathen. So our Saviour said to them who heard and rejected the gospel he preached: "Wo unto thee, Chorazin: Wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you."

SERMON XXIV.

SAINTS DESIRE TO SEE THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD.

ONE thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. — PSALM xxvii. 4.

DAVID was a man of war from his youth; and during the greater part of his reign, his duty called him to head his armies, and lead them forth against his enemies, who were almost perpetually invading his kingdom. And though he was willing to follow the voice of God in his providence, yet he sincerely regretted his necessary absence from the house of God. Every revolving Sabbath renewed and increased his strong desires after the precious privileges and enjoyments of the sanctuary. And he was led, on some sacred day of rest, to compose this psalm, in which he expresses the pious feelings of his heart, and his ardent wishes to meet God in the place where he recorded his name, and displayed the moral excellences of his character. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." It was his sincere desire that his business might always admit of his being in the house of God every Sabbath; and he determined, as far as possible, to order his secular concerns so, that he might constantly attend the services of the sanctuary. For he says he viewed this the greatest privilege on earth. "One thing have I desired;" that is, I have desired one thing above all others; and that is, to enjoy without interruption, the public worship of God in his house. This he desired above all things, because it gave him the best opportunity of beholding the beauty of the Lord, and of knowing his mind and will revealed in his word. All good men

feel as the king of Israel felt, and desire to behold the beauty of the Lord, as he displays it in the assembly of his saints, who have a spiritual discerning of spiritual things. This is the plain truth suggested to our present consideration; that good men desire to see the beauty of the Lord. It is proposed,

I. To show in what the beauty of the Lord consists;

II. That good men are capable of seeing his beauty; and,

III. Why they desire to see it.

I. Let us consider in what the beauty of the Lord consists. We call nothing beautiful but what is pleasing; and we call nothing pleasing in a moral agent, but what is morally excellent, or truly virtuous. The beauty of the Lord, therefore, must signify that, in his moral character, which is pleasing to a virtuous and benevolent heart. His beauty is the beauty of holiness. There is no moral excellence in his necessary existence, independence, omnipresence, omnipotence, or omniscience. These natural atributes, separately considered, are neither morally good, nor morally evil; and are either lovely or hateful, according to the heart that governs them. Under the influence of a malevolent heart, they would be infinitely odious and detestable; but under the influence of a benevolent heart, they are great and amiable perfections. The moral beauty and excellence of the Deity lies altogether in his heart, which is purely and perfectly benevolent. God is love; which constitutes his supreme beauty, and comprises all that is virtuous and morally excellent in his nature. Pure, disinterested, universal benevolence, forms the most beautiful and amiable character conceivable. We cannot conceive of any greater excellence in God than a heart full of perfect goodness; and such goodness, the scripture assures us, fills and governs his vast, all comprehensive mind. "There is none good but one, that is God." He is good, and doeth good. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." When Moses besought him to show him his glory, and he granted his petition, he did nothing more than to cause all his goodness to pass before him. All his goodness comprehends all his moral perfections. His holiness, his justice, and his mercy and grace, are only so many branches of his universal goodness. In a word, every thing that is beautiful, amiable and praise-worthy in the Supreme Being, consists in the infinitude of his goodness. I now proceed to show,

II. That good men are capable of seeing this moral beauty of the divine character.

Sinners can see every thing in God but this moral beauty. To this they are totally blind. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually

discerned." The more fully and clearly the moral beauty of the Lord is displayed before the minds of sinners, the more they hate and oppose it. None, therefore, but real christians, or those who have been born again, and become partakers of the divine nature, are capable of seeing the moral beauty of that pure love, which forms the moral glory and excellence of the Deity. But all who are holy as God is holy, can discern the beauty of his holiness. The apostle speaking in the name of christians says, " God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." When he renews the hearts of men, or sheds abroad his love in them, he gives them a spiritual discerning of spiritual things, and causes them to discern the supreme excellence of his moral character. This the apostle John declares in the most explicit terms. He says, " He that loveth not knoweth not God." But on the other hand, he asserts that " love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." And again he says, " God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." These declarations are agreeable to reason, as well as to the feelings of all real christians. For seeing the beauty of any object, and loving that object, are precisely the same thing.

After the heart perceives the amiableness of any object, there is nothing more implied in loving it. So when any man perceives the divine character to be lovely, there is nothing more necessary in order to love it. Of course, all who love God do actually see his moral beauty and excellence. This will more clearly appear, if we consider it in another point of view. Those who love God, have the same kind of love that God has and exercises towards them and all holy creatures. They are holy as God is holy, and feel as God feels. Being benevolent, they discover the beauty of benevolence wherever it is displayed by the kind Parent of the universe. And as he has infinitely more benevolence than all other beings, so he appears infinitely more amiable and beautiful than any other being in the universe. They see him to be just such a being as they desire him to be. They do not desire the least alteration in one of his perfections. They are pleased to see him as holy, as just, as good, and as gracious as he is, and as wise and powerful as he is to do all his pleasure. They see God as he sees himself, glorious in holiness, and of consequence, glorious in all his other attributes, which are under the influence of his perfectly benevolent heart. They see supreme beauty and excellence in his power and wisdom, in his justice and sovereignty, in his mercy and grace, as they are continually exercised for the highest good of the universe. This leads me to show,

III. Why good men sincerely desire to see the beauty of the Lord. Moses besought God, with great importunity, to show him his glory. Job ardently desired to draw near to God, and to have clear views of his supreme excellence. He says, " O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him." Job saw the natural perfections of God in all his works; but he did not, at this time, see the beauty and glory of his moral perfections, which had often afforded him the highest enjoyment. David had very strong desires, from time to time, to see and enjoy the supreme beauty and glory of the divine character. It was the one thing, upon which, above all others, he set his heart. Hear what he says in the fourth psalm, on this subject. " There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." And in the sixty-third psalm, he describes the longings of his heart after peculiar discoveries of the divine glory. " O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Such are the strong and sensible desires of good men to behold the beauty of the Lord, and enjoy the manifestations of his glory. But the question before us is, Why do good men have such peculiar desires to see the moral beauty and glory of God? Here several satisfactory reasons may be given. And,

1. Because the goodness of God, which forms his supreme excellence, spreads a glory over all the other perfections of his nature. Saints as well as others can see no excellence in the greatness and majesty of God, separately from his perfect holiness and benevolence. David beheld God and was troubled, when he saw him without a view of his moral beauty. Good men can take no satisfaction in contemplating upon the mere existence, immensity, majesty and supremacy of the Creator and Governor of all things, while they do not realize his pure, perfect, universal goodness. But when they view him as the God of love, and see the beauty of his benevolence, they take complacency in his eternity, immutability, almighty power and absolute sovereignty. His goodness spreads a glory over the greatness of his wisdom, the greatness of his knowledge, the greatness of his power, and of his material and intellectual kingdom. His goodness, which is pure and perfect benevolence, renders his wisdom a benevolent wisdom, his knowledge a benevolent knowledge, his power a benevolent power, and

his universal supremacy a benevolent supremacy. Those who have seen and tasted that the Lord is good, view all his great and adorable perfections as adorned with the beauty of holiness; and can say to him as David did, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." And as they know that a view of the beauty of the Lord, will put them into the sensible enjoyment of all his perfections, so they ardently desire to see his moral beauty and excellence. Nothing short of this can afford them complete satisfaction. David did not expect to enjoy perfect blessedness, until he should have clear and constant views of the beauty of the Lord in the kingdom of glory, which he joyfully anticipated. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

2. Good men desire to see the beauty of the Lord, because it spreads a beauty over his works, as well as character. It is his ultimate end in creation, that gives a glory to every thing he has made. If his goodness be not seen in creating the heavens and the earth, in forming angels and men, and in giving existence to every sensitive nature, there is no moral beauty perceived in any of the works of his hands. It is only when saints see the earth to be full of the goodness of the Lord, that they discern the moral beauty of the works of creation. While his moral excellence is out of their sight, they view the world just as other men view it; but when they spiritually discern the beauty of his holy and benevolent heart, the heavens appear to declare his glory, and the firmament to show his handy work. They see his glory in the forests, in the fields, in the fruits of the earth, and in every rational, animate and inanimate object. God's good design in every thing he has made, spreads a divine glory over the whole face of nature, which gives a peculiar pleasure to every pious heart. David often felt and expressed such a pleasure in such a view of the works of God. At one time he cries out in raptures, "O that men would praise the Lord, for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" And at another time he prays, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." That is, let God display his goodness, and make his people see it. Whenever any of mankind behold the beauty of God's goodness, they immediately discover a divine glory spread over all his works. How often do those who are called out of darkness into marvellous light, stand and admire the works of creation, on account of the moral beauty they then see in them, but never saw before. A clear view of the beauty of the Lord never fails to put good men into the sensible enjoyment of the world. Viewing it as his world, and as full of his goodness, it

gives them as much satisfaction as if it were all actually put into their hands. Hence they ardently desire to see the beauty of the Lord, that the world which often gives them so much trouble, might become a source of the purest pleasure and enjoyment.

3. Saints desire to see the beauty of the Lord, because this spreads a beauty and glory over all the conduct of God. The ways of providence are often dark and mysterious, and beyond the comprehension of finite, short sighted creatures. The world is governed in a manner which is extremely different from that which mankind are ready to imagine would be wisest and best. And even good men have been greatly perplexed with the strange and unaccountable things which often take place in the world. Job and David were unable to account for the prosperity of the wicked, and the adversity of the righteous. Jacob was involved in great darkness, under the evils which fell upon him. And all the children of God have experienced similar trials. But when, like David, they go into the sanctuary, and behold the beauty of the Lord, the clouds vanish, and in his light they see light. While they behold the perfect goodness of God, and realize that in all events he is seeking the best interest of his whole family in heaven and earth, they see a beauty in all the dispensations of his providence. In perceiving the beauty of his goodness, they perceive a beauty in all his ways, as well as in all his works. The Psalmist, after contemplating the wonders of his divine providence in the earth and in the ocean, makes a very pertinent and instructive remark. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." The perfect goodness of God in ordering all events, spreads a glory over all his dark and mysterious dispensations, which causes the wise and good to rejoice in his universal government. Hence they ardently desire, while they are passing through the dark and trying scenes of this present evil world, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to discern his loving kindness in all the dispensations of providence. This is the only thing that can give them that peace which the world cannot give, nor take away. I may add,

4. Good men ardently desire to behold the beauty of the Lord, because it spreads a light and beauty over his word. The Bible is full of darkness to those who have not a spiritual discerning of spiritual things. Unholy men often complain that they cannot understand the scriptures, and reconcile the dark and inconsistent things contained in them. And the very imperfect discernment which good men have of the beauty of the Lord, often subjects them to great difficulties in understanding his word. The history of his conduct towards angels, towards

our first parents, towards the Jews, towards the heathen, and towards those who embrace and reject the gospel, often appears dark to the children of God. So do the commands, prohibitions and threatenings of the divine law. So do divine invitations and promises. So do the predictions of great future events. And so do the final decisions of the great and last day. But a clear view of the beauty of divine benevolence spreads a beauty over all these dark and difficult things in scripture, and enables those who are holy as God is holy, just as God is just, and good as God is good, to see why he commands all men to love him supremely upon pain of his everlasting displeasure; why he saves a part and only a part of mankind; why he causes so many natural and moral evils to abound; why he has conducted all things as he has done; and why he will settle all the affairs of the universe in the manner he has told us in his word. Indeed, it is the moral beauty, glory and rectitude of the Deity, which spreads a supreme glory over himself and over all his works.

I shall conclude at present with one reflection.

It appears from this subject, that the worthy communicants at the table of Christ have a precious opportunity of seeing and enjoying the beauty of the Lord. God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in their hearts to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. God has made the brightest display of his goodness, which is the supreme excellence of his character, in so loving the world as to give his dearly beloved Son, to pour out his soul unto death on the cross to make atonement for the sins of his guilty and perishing creatures, and to open the way for their restoration to his forfeited favor. While Christ crucified is clearly exhibited before the eyes of his enlightened followers by the symbols of his body and blood, they have the most precious opportunity that they can have, this side of heaven, to behold the beauty of the Lord, shining with its brightest lustre in the face of Jesus Christ. Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, that you may be changed into the same image from glory to glory. The season will be delightful and edifying, if you please to make it so by grateful reflections and joyful anticipations.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be true, as has been said, that the supreme beauty or glory of God consists in his pure and universal goodness, then sinners hate God for that for which alone they ought to love him supremely. It cannot be denied that they are disaffected towards God, that their heart is alienated from him, and that they have a carnal mind, which is enmity against him, not subject

to his law, neither indeed can be. But why are they enemies to him? They do not hate him for any of his natural attributes. They do not hate him because he is eternal, self existent, independent, all wise, or all powerful. They have no objections against his having such an existence, and possessing such perfections. Why then do they hate him? No other reason can be given for their hating him, but his goodness in employing all his perfections to promote the most wise and benevolent purposes. If he would employ them solely for their personal, private good, they would be highly pleased, not only that he exists, but that he governs all things. But he has told them in his word, and confirmed it by his providence, that he is not altogether such an one as themselves. He has required them to exercise pure, disinterested love, and forbidden them to exercise the least partial, selfish affection. He has declared that he will reign in righteousness, and bring the private interests of individuals into subordination to his own glory, and the higher interests of the universe. And who can say this is not an expression of pure, perfect, disinterested, universal goodness? But it is for this, and this only, that sinners hate him. Their eyes are evil, because he is good. They hate his moral character, which is his supreme glory, beauty and excellence, with perfect hatred. Their selfish, stout hearts say that he shall not reign over them. His goodness has no form or beauty in their eyes wherefore they should love it. Though there are many shades of difference in the external conduct of sinners, yet they all agree to hate God, and to hate him precisely for the same thing, that is, for his goodness, for which they ought to love him supremely. Why do sinners murmur and repine under divine providence? Because it displays divine goodness. Why do sinners hate the Bible? Because it displays divine goodness. Why do sinners deny the Bible? Because it displays divine goodness. Why do sinners deny the existence of God? Because they suppose if he exists, he must be good. Every sinner says in his heart, There is no God. That is, he wishes there were no God of perfect goodness. Though many say that the only reason why sinners hate God is because they are ignorant of his moral beauty and excellence, yet the truth is, that they hate him because they do know the excellence of his moral character. Christ, who knew the hearts of sinners, said, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

2. If saints sincerely and ardently desire to behold the beauty of the Lord, then they are essentially different from sinners. Saints view the goodness of God as constituting his supreme beauty and glory, and sincerely desire to see the glory of his goodness; but sinners do not desire to see his goodness, and when it is most clearly exhibited before them, they hate it more

than any other trait in the divine character. These different views and feelings in respect to the supreme beauty and glory of God, demonstrate that saints are radically and essentially different from sinners. It does not arise from knowledge on the one side, nor from ignorance on the other. They both know enough of divine goodness to love it, and to hate it. Why then do saints love it, while sinners hate it? Sinners are very fond of believing that saints do not essentially differ from them, and often endeavor to account for the external difference in their conduct, in the same way that the accuser of the brethren attempted to account for Job's external conduct. They suppose that it is owing to their selfishness, that they pay external obedience to the divine commands. They suppose that they outwardly pay respect to God, either because they have received, or expect to receive peculiar favors from him, and not because they love him for the moral beauty and excellence of his character. But it appears from what saints say of themselves, and from what God says of them, that they love him for his supreme moral excellence. And if this be true, there is no way to account for it but by supposing that saints have a new, a better and more benevolent heart than sinners, which is a radical and essential difference. So that if God should place saints and sinners in precisely the same circumstances, they would feel and act differently towards him. If he should place them in the same state of prosperity, they would feel and act differently towards him. Or if he should place them in the same state of adversity, they would feel and act differently towards him. Or if he should place them in heaven, they would feel and act differently towards him. This has been demonstrated in a thousand instances. Saul and David were placed on the throne of Israel, but they felt and acted differently. Judas and the apostles were placed under similar circumstances, but they felt and acted differently. Let saints and sinners be placed in the same situation in any part of the universe, and they would feel and act differently. There must be therefore an essential, radical difference between the hearts of saints and the hearts of sinners, while the latter hate, and the former love the moral excellence of the divine character.

3. If God be perfectly good, and his goodness spreads a moral beauty and excellence over all his perfections, then there is nothing to hinder sinners from loving him but merely their own selfishness. If they possessed any true benevolence, or disinterested love, they would discern the glory and excellence of the divine benevolence, and feel a pleasure in cordial reconciliation to God. And there is nothing that prevents their discerning the beauty and glory of God's benevolence, which

spreads a beauty and glory over all his other perfections, and all the displays of them in his works, in his providence, and in his word; but their selfishness. They are very loath, however, to own that this is the only difficulty in the way of their loving God. They sometimes plead that their ignorance of God prevents their loving him. But they have no ignorance in their understanding but what arises from the blindness of their hearts; and notwithstanding this blindness, they know enough of God to hate him, and consequently enough to love him. They more commonly and confidently plead that they have a hard and evil heart, which they can neither soften nor change. But they have no heart but what consists in free, voluntary exercises, which they are able to change, and which God requires them to change. It is only because they hate God, that they cannot love him. But can their hating God, whose goodness renders him infinitely amiable, be a good excuse for not loving him? Their reason and conscience tell them that all the excuses they ever have made, or can make, only serve to discover their selfishness and criminality, in hating a being whom they are able and bound to love with supreme affection.

4. If the supreme glory of God consists in his goodness, then the more clearly his goodness is exhibited before the minds of sinners, the more difficult they always find it to be to love him. Christ exhibited the impartial, disinterested, universal goodness of God in the clearest and strongest light, in his public and private discourses; and of all the doctrines he preached, this was the most disagreeable and stumbling to sinners. They called it a hard saying, and some said, "Who then can be saved?" It was too hard for the amiable young man to hear and bear, and he went away sorrowful. While sinners have a low and obscure view of the moral glory and excellence of the divine character, they are apt to think that they can, and even do love God. But when his pure, holy, impartial benevolence is clearly exhibited, they are ready to lament their moral weakness, and cry that it is impossible for them to love God, for their carnal mind is perfect enmity against him. Their selfishness cannot be reconciled to his benevolence. And the more clearly his love and benevolence is explained and illustrated, the more difficulty they find in seeing the supreme beauty and glory of it, and he appears less amiable than the most unamiable and odious being in the universe. His pure, disinterested love, instead of spreading a beauty over all his perfections, and works, and ways, and words, involves the whole world and whole universe in darkness, in the view of their totally selfish hearts. Is there a person who has been under genuine convictions, that does not know this to be true? There

is no way better adapted to determine whether a man be really blind, than to exhibit light before him; and so there is no way better adapted to determine whether sinners are morally blind, than to exhibit the supreme beauty and glory of the divine character before them, and inquire whether they see and love it. Christ said he came into the world to make them blind who said they saw. And he effectually did it. And so do all, who preach as he did. Those who are spiritually blind, complain bitterly of such preaching and such preachers. They say they cannot understand them. And when they say so, they prove the total moral blindness of their own sinful hearts.

5. If saints desire to see the beauty of the Lord, then we see one good reason why they love to attend the public worship of God in his house constantly. David, who desired to see the beauty of the Lord, loved to attend the services of the sanctuary constantly. He loved to be with God and with his people in his house, where God made the brightest displays of his glory, and the clearest revelation of his will. He ardently desired to attend constantly the worship and ordinances of God in his house, for the sake of two things especially. One was to gain the knowledge, and the other was to gain the enjoyment of God. These desires he expresses in the strongest terms, in the text. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." What is this one thing? It is "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord;" that is, to enjoy him, "and to inquire in his temple;" where his will is revealed in his word. These same desires he as clearly and fervently expresses at different times. In the sixty-third Psalm he devoutly says, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." In the eighty-fourth psalm he devoutly cries, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Those who have seen and tasted that the Lord is good, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby in knowledge and grace, and behold and enjoy the beauty of the Lord. And since these spiritual and divine favors may always be found, and always enjoyed in the house and worship of God, all good men desire constantly to attend the services of the sanctuary, and deeply regret being providentially prevented. They will take more care, and surmount more and greater difficulties, to attend public worship, than to attend to their own personal, secular concerns. It must be allowed,

therefore, that those professors who constantly attend the worship and ordinances of God in his house, do exhibit one beautiful evidence that they love the courts of the Lord, and find a pleasure in inquiring in his temple, and beholding his beauty. While, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that those who are careless and negligent in attending the sacred duties and services of the sanctuary, lack one evidence of their sincerity. Here, then, let me ask those who have come to the table of Christ this day, whether they have exhibited more evidence of their sincerity than of their insincerity, in these respects? There is no doubt that some have exhibited more evidence of sincerity than of insincerity. And can there be a doubt whether some have not exhibited more evidence of insincerity than of sincerity?

This subject now speaks both to the sincere and to the insincere. To the sincere it says, You have desired to see the beauty of the Lord in the sanctuary, and you have seen and enjoyed it there. You have inquired in his temple, and grown in knowledge and grace. You resolve to dwell in the house of the Lord, and tread his courts every Sabbath, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, beseeching God to show you his glory. He has promised to meet you and bless you where he has recorded his name, as long as you live, and afterwards to fix you in his temple above, to go out no more for ever. Can there be a brighter prospect opened before you? Can you be bound by stronger obligations, or have greater or more endearing motives set before you to be constant in running the Christian race, in attending Christian ordinances, and in seeking Christian enjoyments?

But this subject speaks a very different language to the insincere, who have not seen, nor desired to see the beauty of the Lord. You have always been in darkness. Your darkness is increasing by all the light which God has exhibited before you, by his works, by his providence, by his word, and by his ordinances. But your present darkness is nothing in comparison with that to which you are exposed, when the time shall come which will fix the state of both sincere and insincere professors. "I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

SERMON XXV.

WALKING WITH GOD.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him. — Genesis, v. 24.

Enoch was one of the ancient patriarchs, and one of the seventh generation from Adam. His father, Jared, was a godly man, who, it seems, walked within his house with a perfect heart, and brought up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For his son Enoch appears to have been pious from his youth, though he lived in a day of great degeneracy, when the friends of God were few, and the world were rapidly departing from the paths of virtue, and filling the earth with violence. In such a day, he lived in a peculiar manner. Instead of following the multitude to do evil, he walked with God, and secured his peculiar favor. "He was not; for God took him." This phrase, it is natural to suppose, denotes a special token of the divine favor; and the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, confirms this supposition. "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Such a happy removal from this evil world to a far better one, was a signal mark of the divine approbation. From this instance of the divine conduct, we may justly conclude,

That God will manifest some peculiar tokens of his favor to those who walk with him. I shall,

I. Consider what is implied in walking with God; and,

II. Show that God will manifest some peculiar tokens of his favor to those who walk with him.

I. We are to consider what is implied in walking with God.

1. This implies reconciliation to God. All mankind come into the world in a state of moral depravity. Their hearts by nature are unholy and unfriendly to God. They go astray from him as soon as they are born. "They say unto him, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Instead of loving him, they hate him; and instead of walking with him, they flee from him. They are opposed to him, and he is opposed to them. There is a mutual and irreconcilable alienation from each other. And until this mutual alienation of affection be removed, it is morally impossible for men to walk with God. For, "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" But God cannot become reconciled to them, before they become reconciled to him. The reconciliation must begin on their part; and when they become cordially reconciled to him, he is cordially reconciled to them. He loves those who love him, and is ready to walk with them. Though they may appear to walk with him before their disaffection to him is removed, yet they cannot walk with him, in sincerity and truth, until the native enmity of their carnal mind is slain, and the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts. Though Enoch early walked with God, yet he did not walk acceptably with him until he had a new heart, which was after God's own heart, and which laid a permanent foundation of mutual reconciliation and friendship.

2. Those who walk with God, maintain a steady course of cordial obedience to his commands. They esteem his precepts concerning all things to be right. They delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man. They imitate the example of Zacharias and Elizabeth, who "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They are not like those who, David says, "keep not the covenant of God, and refuse to walk in his law." Nor like those who, Nehemiah says, "are disobedient, rebellious, and cast the divine law behind their backs." Walking denotes continued and persevering motion; and those who sincerely and cordially walk with God, are not weary in well doing, but are steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in obedience to the divine commands. Thus Enoch walked steadily and perseveringly in obedience to God, while the world was full of violence. Thus Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, walked in persevering obedience to God, while the great mass of the people grew faint and weary, and perished in the wilderness. And thus the apostles continued to follow Christ, whilst "many of his professed disciples went back and walked no more with him." Our Saviour pressed the duty of perseverance in obedience upon all his professed followers, and plainly told

them that, unless they endured to the end, they would not be saved. The true disciples of Christ are willing to follow him whithersoever he leads them, through every stage and circumstance of life, though they may sometimes hesitate and falter in their Christian course.

3. Those who walk with God, maintain an intimate and habitual intercourse with God, by their daily devotions. It is by this intercourse that they draw near to God, and he draws near to them, and gives them a realizing sense of his presence and assistance. Prayer is a solemn mode of their meditating upon the being, the perfections, the presence and government of God, and upon their own weakness, wants and imperfections. It is by their devotional exercises that they live as seeing God who is invisible, that they confide in his faithfulness, rely upon his assistance, and enjoy communion and fellowship with him. David says to God, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee." The apostle James says to christians, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." The apostle Paul says to christians, "Seeing we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,—let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Christ says, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Those who walk with God, habitually feel their need of his assistance in duty, of his support in trials, and of the light of his countenance in seasons of doubt and darkness. They durst not lean to their own understandings, nor trust in their own hearts; but feel the propriety of acknowledging God in all their ways, that he may direct their steps. For these reasons, they habitually endeavor to maintain an intimate intercourse with God in their daily devotions. As they desire to do every thing to the glory of God, so they pray to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long; and as they desire to be careful for nothing, so in every thing, by prayer and supplication, they make known their requests unto God. In a word, they walk with God, by living a holy and devout life.

4. Walking with God implies approving and walking in his way. Those who walk with God, regard the operations of his hand in the dispensations of his providence. God is continually carrying into execution his wise, and holy, and gracious designs, by which he is displaying his perfections, and speaking to the eyes, and ears, and heart, and consciences of mankind. David declares, "The works of the Lord are great,

sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." And he says to God with respect to himself, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands." God is to be seen in all his works and ways; and those who walk with him have eyes to see him, and ears to hear him, and hearts to perceive him, in all the dispensations of his providence. Accordingly, David declares, "The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth." And again, speaking of the dispensations of providence, he says, "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." The prophet Isaiah speaks the same language. "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee. Yea, with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Those who walk with God, look through all secondary causes, and view his hand and heart in all he does in respect to themselves in particular, as well as in respect to the world in general. And so far as they see and understand his designs, they cordially approve of them, and are willing to be workers together with him, in carrying them into execution. They mean to obey the voice of his providence, as well as the voice of his word. As they discern the signs of the times, so they mean to feel and act agreeably to them. While Enoch walked with God, and saw how God suffered the triumphing of the wicked, he anticipated their fearful doom, and solemnly warned them of it. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of those, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed; and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Those who walk with God are governed by his eye, as dutiful children are governed by the eye of the parent. I must add here,

5. That those who walk with God, decline walking with the world. As soon as they begin to walk with God, they resolve to walk with his friends, and not with his enemies. It is the peculiar character of good men that they walk together, and not with the wicked. David says to God, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." And again he says, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." And he farther declares, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in

the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Those who walk with God, are sensible that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, that it is their duty not to be conformed to the world, and that it is their safety and happiness to come out from the world and to walk with God, that he may dwell in them, and walk in them, and be their almighty Father and friend, as he has promised. Now, if those who walk with God live such a holy and devout life as we have described, it is justly to be expected,

II. That he will manifest some peculiar tokens of his favor to them. God translated Enoch that he should not see death, as a testimony that he pleased him. Since God is pleased with those who walk with him, we must suppose he will give them some peculiar tokens of his favor. But as they do not merit any favor by walking with him, so he acts as a sovereign in granting his peculiar favors to one and another, when and how he pleases. And among the favors which he usually grants to those who walk with him, I will mention the following:

1. God will guard them against the frowns of the world. If they were of the world, the world would love his own; but because they are not of the world, but God has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them. It is impossible for men to walk with God, without declining to walk with the world, or without reproving and condemning the world, which never fails to excite their resentment and opposition. God knows therefore, that those who walk with him, stand in need of his constant care and protection; and accordingly, while they walk with him, he will walk with them, and keep them as in the hollow of his hand, from the innumerable seen and unseen dangers to which they are continually exposed. We read, "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." This has always been God's usual conduct towards those who have walked with him. Enoch walked with God, and preached righteousness to an ungodly world. Though it is probable that the world, which then began to be filled with violence, wished to wreak their enmity upon Enoch, yet the Lord took him, and translated him, that he should not see death by the hand of violence, nor in any other way. This was a signal mark of the divine favor and protection. As Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and walked with God, so he found grace in the eyes of the Lord; who, while he was about to

sweep the whole earth with the besom of destruction, preserved him from sinking and perishing with an ungodly world. God delivered just Lot, when he condemned and overthrew the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob walked with God, who granted them peculiar tokens of his favor, care and protection, through the numerous evils and dangers to which they were exposed, while pilgrims and strangers on the earth. And while their posterity walked with God, he withheld not his care and protection from them; but when they were few in number, and went from one nation to another, and from one kingdom to another, "he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." So long as the friends of God walk with him, he never fails to spread the wing of his protection over them, which is a peculiar token of his favor.

2. God graciously guards his friends while they walk with him, from their invisible, as well as visible enemies. They are continually exposed to the subtle devices and violent assaults of him who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and leads them captive at his will. But though his power and dominion are weakened in the hearts of real saints, yet he endeavors to get advantage against them in their present state of moral imperfection. He knows that they sometimes wander from God; and when he finds them at a distance from him, he knows that they are as weak as other men; and he does not fail to employ his power and subtlety to blind their minds, corrupt their hearts, and plunge them in darkness, doubts, disobedience, and distress. But while they walk closely with God, Satan will not dare to approach them; or if he does, God will enable them to resist his fiery darts, and not suffer them to be overcome. This the apostle assures christians for their encouragement and comfort. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And again he says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Though God suffered Christ to be tempted forty days in the wilderness, yet he enabled him to resist and overcome his subtle and malignant adversary. Though God gave liberty to Satan to tempt Job, yet while Job kept near to God, he guarded his heart, so that he sinned not. The apostle John says, in general, concerning every one who is born of God, "He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Though Satan desires most ardently to have those who generally walk most closely with God, that he may sift them as

wheat, yet God will bruise Satan under their feet. It is one of the privileges of the sons of God, and a peculiar token of his favor, that he will protect them, while they walk with him, against the wiles of their spiritual enemies.

3. God will give those who walk with him, peculiar evidence of their interest in his special grace. He loves those who walk with him, and will manifest his love to them. He loved Enoch while he walked with him, and before his translation he gave him this testimony, that he pleased God, and stood high in his favor. How he did this, we are not told; but we may justly conclude that he did it in some such manner as he made known his special love to other eminent saints. He expressly called Abraham his friend, when he offered up his son upon the altar. He sent a messenger from heaven, to declare that Daniel was greatly beloved. And he manifested his special love to David, by lifting the light of his countenance upon him. He acknowledges that he had received this peculiar mark of the divine favor. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." That this gladness which God put in his heart, was a peculiar evidence of his being in a state of grace, appears from his praying for such an evidence, when he had lost it. "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: and save me for thy mercies' sake." "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." And this was the peculiar favor which Moses and Aaron were commanded to ask God to grant his people. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." While saints walk with God, they may expect to have the light of his countenance, and the joy of his salvation. He will shine in their hearts to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. He will give them the spirit of adoption, cause them to cry Abba, Father, and make them know that they are his children, and heirs of everlasting life. This peculiar favor he will grant to his friends while they walk with him, but no longer. For when they forsake him, he will hide his face from them.

4. God will manifest his peculiar favor to those who walk with him, by giving them not only inward light, and joy, and

peace, and the full assurance of hope; but by granting them outward prosperity. We are not told, indeed, whether Enoch enjoyed outward prosperity; but we know that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Job, and David, and Solomon, enjoyed great external prosperity while they walked with God. It was also a proverb in Israel: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it." David declares, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth, shall prosper." Though God does not bestow outward prosperity upon those who walk with him, exclusively; yet, when he does bestow it upon them, they ought to view it not only as a blessing, but as a testimony that they please him.

5. Those who walk with God, have ground to hope for another great and peculiar favor; that is, his gracious and comforting presence, when they leave the world. This peculiar favor he granted to Enoch in a signal manner. He exempted him from the pains and terrors of death, and miraculously translated him from earth to heaven, as a testimony of his being well pleased with his holy, exemplary and heavenly life. And he gave the same testimony to the holy and useful life of Elijah. "And it came to pass, as Elisha and he walked on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Though these are singular cases, yet all who sincerely and closely walk with God in life, have ground to hope that he will afford them his gracious and supporting presence in their dying hour. He caused the pious patriarchs to die in peace. David expected to die in peace; for he said to God in health, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And agreeably to this well founded hope, his last words expressed peculiar peace and consolation. "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." With these bright prospects he fell asleep. It has been often and justly observed, that good men generally die in the same manner in which they have lived. If they have walked with God, and generally enjoyed his gracious presence, they commonly enjoy the light of his countenance in their dying moments, and leave the world in peace. God can disarm death of its sting, and the grave of

its terror; and those who sincerely and closely walk with him, have reason to hope, as well as to desire, that he will give them this peculiar testimony that they have pleased him, when they come to die.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We may learn from the nature and effects of walking with God, how all true believers may attain to the full assurance of hope. It is a false and unscriptural notion, that assurance is the essence of faith. Men may become really reconciled to God, and cordially embrace the gospel, and yet remain very uncertain whether God is reconciled to them, and has received them into the number of his family. Indeed it is a very common case, that true believers are troubled with doubts and fears that they have not experienced a saving change, and are not in a state of grace and favor with God, even after they have had a prevailing hope of having experienced a saving change, and actually professed religion. But why do so many walk in darkness, and enjoy so little satisfactory evidence of their being the children of God, and entitled to his pardoning mercy through the divine Redeemer? It does not appear that Enoch walked in darkness, and saw no light, while he walked with God; but it appears, on the contrary, that he had this testimony, that he pleased God, and enjoyed the full assurance of hope. And it appears from the account we have in scripture of many other eminent saints who walked closely with God, that they enjoyed such tokens of the divine approbation, as banished all distressing doubts and fears from their minds. It must, then, be owing to some blamable cause, that real believers do not enjoy the full assurance of hope, and that evidence of their gracious state which excludes painful fears and doubts. If it be true that God gives peculiar tokens of his favor to those who sincerely and closely walk with him, then the proper and sure way of attaining satisfactory evidence of a gracious state, is to walk sincerely and closely with him. It is, therefore, because believers at this day do not walk with God, as Enoch, Abraham, and many other pious men under both the Mosaic and Christian dispensations walked, that they do not attain to the full assurance of hope, as they did. And this is certainly a blamable cause. Believers are now as capable of walking closely and constantly with God as Enoch was; and God is as ready now to give them the peculiar tokens of his favor, as he was to manifest his peculiar love to him. Why then do they not give diligence to make their calling and election sure? It must be owing to their voluntary and criminal negligence. They must blame themselves, if they wander from God, and

love to wander from him, and justly expose themselves to the hidings of his face, and to the darkness, and doubts, and fears, which follow from it. God has expressly told them that, if they walk with him, he will walk with them; but if they forsake him, he will forsake them. But notwithstanding this, they are very apt to complain of their darkness and doubts under the hidings of his face, rather than to condemn themselves for departing from him. He gives them tokens of his displeasure, and not of his approbation, which ought to lead them to return to him, from whom they have criminally revolted. David did this, and he says he found the happy effects of it. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord,—and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." If saints would prevent, or remove darkness, doubts and distress from their minds, let them walk closely with God, who will then give them peculiar tokens of their pleasing him, and standing high in his favor.

2. If God manifests peculiar tokens of his favor to those who walk with him, then they have more to gain, than to lose, by walking with him. Good men often depart from God, and conform to the world, for the sake of gaining their friendship, or through fear of losing it, and exposing themselves to their reproach, contempt and opposition. The world love their own, but not those who come out from them, and walk with God. They feel themselves not only forsaken, but condemned, by those who choose to walk with God rather than with them, which excites unpleasant and unfriendly feelings in their breasts towards the godly. They have ground to expect, therefore, that they shall lose the friendship of the world, and experience the bitter effects of their enmity and opposition. This has been the lot of those who have sincerely and habitually walked with God, in every age of the world. It seems to be intimated that Enoch's walking with God excited the mortal enmity of the wicked, who sought his life, and would have taken it away, if God had not preserved it, by translating him to heaven. The apostle says: "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him." This seems to imply that his enemies searched for him, and would have slain him, if God had not privately taken him out of the world. And this conjecture seems to be strengthened, by his being placed at the head of that catalogue of worthies, mentioned in the eleventh of Hebrews, who walked with God; and many of whom "were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in

sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Though these pious patriarchs lived in an evil day, and suffered such an accumulation and complication of evils, yet they gained more than they lost, by walking with God. For they enjoyed peculiar tokens of his favor. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Wherefore God was not ashamed to be called their God; and prepared for them a city, to which he triumphantly conveyed them. Now if the saints of old gained much more than they lost, by walking with God, then it is very certain that saints at this day have much more to gain than to lose, by walking with God. They may lose some of their nominal friends, and incur the neglect, reproach, contempt and opposition of the enemies of all righteousness. But what are these losses in comparison with the peculiar tokens of the divine favor? God is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He loves those who love him. He will walk with those who walk with him. He will guard those who walk with him, not only against their visible, but invisible enemies. He will give them that peace which the world cannot give, nor take away. He will give them full assurance of hope. He will afford them all that outward prosperity which they can reasonably desire. And finally, he will prepare them for a peaceful death, and a glorious immortality beyond the grave. Real saints have infinitely more to gain, than they can possibly lose, by walking with God. They are, therefore, always unwise, as well as criminal, when they forget and forsake God, and walk with the world, to gain their friendship, or to avoid their frowns. Both their duty and happiness require them to walk constantly and joyfully with God.

3. If God be highly pleased with his friends while they walk with him, then he must be highly displeased when they depart from him. The best of saints are more or less inconstant in their walk with God. Though Enoch is not charged with any inconstancy, yet there can be no doubt but his love to God sometimes abated, and he became cold, and dull, and negligent in walking with God. We know, however, that other eminent saints frequently wandered from God, which was highly displeasing to him, and drew down tokens of his just displeasure. As God always takes notice of saints while they walk with him, so he takes equal notice of them when they forget and forsake him. If they leave him for a longer, or shorter season, he knows it; and not only so, he knows *why* they deviate from the path of duty. He knows that they never forsake him, but for the sake of some inferior worldly object. He sees what

mere vanities attract their attention and attachment, and draw them away from him. Of this they are often unconscious. They do not perceive how often, or how much, they suffer their thoughts and affections to wander from him. The world and the things of the world imperceptibly occupy their thoughts, and turn them aside from their designed and habitual walk with God. But he always sees all their sinful deviations from the path of duty; and of consequence they appear much more sinful in his view, than their own. Hence says the apostle John, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." These numerous deviations and departures from God, which are highly displeasing to him, are the reasons why those who do sometimes walk with God receive no more peculiar tokens of his favor, and so many tokens of his displeasure. They have always reason to expect, when they forget and forsake him, that he will be displeased, and some way or other manifest his displeasure towards them, and continue the manifestations of it, until they return to him and walk with him.

4. If God will walk with those who walk with him, then we may justly conclude that he will cause all those who once sincerely walked with him, to continue walking with him, till they leave the world, and enter into eternal rest. He caused Enoch to walk with him three hundred years, before he translated him to heaven. And there is reason to believe that he caused Adam, and Seth, and Enos, and Cainan, and Mahalaleel, and Jared, and Methuselah, and Lamech, and Noah, to walk with him seven or eight hundred years, though iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold and died. God gives all his sincere friends some peculiar tokens of his favor, which he never gives to those who are not cordially reconciled to him. And one of these peculiar favors is his gracious presence with them, which effectually guards them against both their visible and invisible enemies; so that they cannot cause them to fall away finally. This assurance of final perseverance Christ gave to his true disciples. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." God keeps his eye constantly fixed upon those who once walk with him, and sees all the evils and dangers to which they are exposed from the things of the world, the cares of the world, the business of the world, the men of the world, and from their great moral imperfection and subtle adversary; and he determines to preserve them, and keep them by his almighty

power, through faith, unto salvation. And if God be for them, who can be against them? Upon this solid foundation, the apostle confidently declares, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. It appears from the nature of walking with God, that those who walk with him in a day of degeneracy, do peculiar service and honor to religion. The world had been gradually degenerating from Seth to Enoch; and had it not been for them, and the other patriarchs who walked with God and maintained his cause, the world would have been destroyed much sooner than it was. This is evident from one single consideration, that God did not destroy it till there was but one man in it who walked with him. Seth, Enoch, and the other pious patriarchs, were the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, till they were taken out of it. Good men have a peculiar opportunity, in a time of great degeneracy, to display the beauty, reality and importance of religion, and to restrain the corruptions of the times. It was evidently owing to the dark times in which Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David and Daniel lived, that they did so much good, and became so celebrated and distinguished in the world. When iniquity abounds, and the love of many nominal saints waxes cold, it tends to fill the minds of those who walk with God with a holy zeal, fortitude and resolution to triumph over all opposition, and to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the service of the Lord. A day of degeneracy is a trying day to all who profess to walk with God; and, if they are sincere, will make them shine with peculiar lustre. It is really a more trying time to professors than a time of revival of religion. Then insincere professors are naturally, though reluctantly, carried along with the current. But in a time of degeneracy, they are pleasantly and insensibly led astray from God. Though the world be not so universally corrupt now, as it was about the time of Enoch, yet it is more deeply corrupted. Wherever the gospel does not purify, it corrupts the hearts of men. The Christian world is far more corrupt than the heathen world. And though the hearts of many individuals, at this day, are softened and sanctified, yet a vast many more are hardened and corrupted, especially in some places; and in none, perhaps, more than in this. How small is the number of those who walk closely and constantly with God, and, like the patriarchs, condemn the world!

6. This subject calls upon all who have professed to walk with God, to inquire whether they have walked worthy of the

vocation wherewith they are called. Have you received and given evidence of this? Enoch, who walked with God, received testimony that he pleased him; and he gave testimony to the world, that he walked with God, and they saw and hated his testimony. If God gives some tokens of his favor to those who walk with him, you ought to inquire whether he has given any of these tokens to you. Has he given you that peace which the world cannot give? Has he given you the assurance of hope? Has he kept you near to himself, and not suffered you to wander from him? Have you given evidence to the world that you have walked with God, not only in his special ordinances, but in your daily concerns and intercourse with the world? Have the world claimed you, or opposed you? It is impossible for any to walk closely and constantly with God, and not manifest it, in a greater or less degree, to the world. The men of the world do not feel indifferent to those who forsake, and condemn, and oppose them. If you have walked with God, he has given you evidence of it; and the world have given you evidence of it. Be entreated to ascertain what evidence you have, for you, or against you. You may and ought to do this, for your present and future peace.

Finally, This subject exhorts all who have not hitherto walked with God, to walk with him. He commands you to walk with him. He invites you to walk with him. He promises you the highest tokens of his favor, if you will walk with him. He will protect you from your visible and invisible enemies; he will give you inward peace and tranquillity; he will prepare you for a peaceful death, and a blessed immortality. But if you refuse to walk with him, he has threatened to banish you from his presence. And he has recorded, for your warning and admonition, his awful treatment of those who have refused to walk with him. The old world refused, and were swept away by the besom of destruction. Sodom and Gomorrah refused to walk with him, and he set them forth as ensamples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The Jews in Christ's day refused to follow him, and walk with him, and he destroyed them by most exemplary judgments. And God still says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." Are you prepared to meet such tremendous consequences of divine wrath? Turn, turn ye, therefore, for why will ye die?

SERMON XXVI.

TRIAL OF ABRAHAM.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest; and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. — Genesis, xxii. 2.

This is the most extraordinary command which we find in scripture. In order to set it in the most intelligible and instructive light, I shall make the following inquiries.

I. Let us inquire, whether God had a right to give this command to Abraham. The enemies of divine revelation allege this command, as an unanswerable objection against the inspiration of the Mosaic history. They challenge all the divines in the world, to reconcile this command with the law of nature written in every human heart. They say, it is a plain violation of that rule of right which is founded in the nature of things, for any man to imbrue his hands in the blood of his child. They say, if such an action be not wrong, it is impossible to prove any action to be so; for it is nothing less than murder, which is repugnant to every dictate of justice, benevolence and humanity. But however plausible these objections against the divine command may appear, at first view, they are entirely groundless. For,

In the first place, God did not command Abraham to murder Isaac, or to take away his life from malice prepense. He required him only to offer him a burnt sacrifice; and though this implied the taking away of life, yet it did not imply any thing of the nature of murder. God required Abraham to take his son, his only son, whom he loved, and in the exercise of love to him, to offer him a burnt sacrifice. This was essentially different

from requiring him to slay his son, as Cain slew his brother Abel, from malice prepense. It is impossible to see that there was any thing morally evil, or in its own nature wrong, in the divine command to Abraham. God required nothing of Abraham but what he could do in the exercise of that love which is the fulfilling of the law. It was no more intrinsically wrong, for God to require Abraham to sacrifice his son in the exercise of pure benevolence, than it was to require him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's family, and sojourn in a strange land. None can object to this command as being wrong in the nature of things, without first perverting the plain and obvious meaning of it. According to both the letter and spirit of it, it was entirely consistent with the moral rectitude of the Deity, to require Abraham to sacrifice his son.

In the next place, it must be allowed that God himself had an original and independent right to take away that life from Isaac, which he had of his mere sovereignty given him. It is a divine and self evident truth, that he has a right to do what he will with his own creatures. And this right God not only claims, but constantly exercises, in respect to the lives of men. He taketh away, and who can hinder him? And he takes away when, and where, and by whom he pleases. He sometimes takes away with a stroke of his own hand, and sometimes by the stroke of the assassin, and murderer, and the executioners of justice. He commanded Samuel to hew Agag in pieces before the Lord. His own right to take away the life of man, gives him full right to command whom he pleases to take away the life of another. He had, therefore, an absolute right to command Abraham to take away his son's life. And his command to take away his son's life, no more required him to murder Isaac, than his command to Saul to slay Agag, required him to murder that captivated king.

Farthermore, God has a right to require men to do that at one time, which he has forbidden them to do at another. Though he had forbidden men to offer human sacrifices in general, yet he had a right to require Abraham, in particular, to offer up Isaac as a burnt sacrifice. And after he had required him to sacrifice Isaac, he had a right to forbid him to do it, as he actually did. Though God forbid Balaam, at first, to comply with the request of Balak, and go with the messengers whom he sent to him, yet afterwards he told Balaam to go with them. God has a right to countermand his own orders. As there was nothing morally evil in God's commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son, so there was no inconsistency in his commanding him to do it; notwithstanding his general prohibition to mankind to offer human sacrifices. If we only view the

command in the text in its true and obvious import, we cannot discover any thing in it contrary to the light of nature, or the moral character of God; and, consequently, must be convinced that he had an absolute right to give such a command to Abraham. Let us now inquire,

II. Whether Abraham could know that this command came from God. Those who deny that God could consistently give such a command to him, deny that he could rationally know and believe that he actually gave him such a command. This they say was so different from, if not contrary to all other commands of God, and so singular, extraordinary, and unaccountable, that he could not have so good reasons to believe, as to disbelieve, that it came from God. Now it must be granted by all, that if Abraham did sacrifice Isaac, or offer him upon the altar, he really thought God did require him to do it; and, if he did really think so, it must have been owing either to his own heated imagination, or to the delusion of some evil spirit, or else to some real evidence of God's requiring him to sacrifice his son.

But it is evident that it could not be owing to his own heated imagination; because there was nothing in nature to lead him to form such an imagination. The command was contrary to every thing that God had before required of him; it was contrary to what God had revealed in respect to human sacrifices; and it was contrary to all the natural instincts, inclinations, and feelings of the human heart. Though men are apt to imagine things which are agreeable to their natural and selfish inclinations, yet they are never apt to imagine things which are totally contrary to all these natural feelings. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that Abraham's imagination would lead him to think that God did require him to sacrifice his only beloved son, if he did not actually require it. It is especially absurd to suppose this of Abraham, who in no other part of his conduct ever discovered a wild or enthusiastic imagination, but exhibited a mind of superior strength, penetration, and discernment. But supposing that he was actually under the influence of a heated imagination: Why did he stop short of his purpose? Why did he not execute his original design, and take away the life of his son? He had three days to reflect upon the extraordinary action. He had prepared the wood, laid it upon the altar, bound his son, and lifted his hand to give the fatal stroke. Can it be supposed that imagination should carry him so far, and then vanish in a moment? Certainly his conduct cannot be accounted for, upon the supposition of imagination.

Nor is there any better reason to think that he was under the delusion of some evil spirit. We can by no means suppose

that God would suffer such an excellent man as Abraham to be deluded in such an extraordinary case, by the great deceiver; nor that Satan would be disposed to tempt Abraham to do what he really thought would be for the glory of God. Nor can we suppose, if Satan viewed it as a criminal action, that he would have restrained him from committing the crime. But if Abraham was not led to think that God required him to sacrifice his son, by a wild imagination, nor by the delusion of an evil spirit, then we are constrained to conclude that he had clear and conclusive evidence of the command's coming from God.

If God did speak to Abraham, and command him to sacrifice his son, he could undoubtedly make him know that it was he who spake to him. God is able to speak in a manner peculiar to himself, and to distinguish his voice from the voice of any created being. To deny that God could make Abraham know that he spake to him, would be to deny the possibility of divine revelation; and that God is as able to speak to his creatures, as they are to speak to one another, in an intelligible manner. And if he did speak to Abraham, and require him to sacrifice his son, he would certainly speak in a manner that Abraham could and would understand. Besides, Abraham was under peculiar advantages to know the voice of God, who had frequently appeared to him, and conversed with him before. If this had been the first time that God had spoken to him, he might not have known his voice. Samuel did not know the voice of God, the first time he spake to him. But Abraham was an old prophet. We have an account of God's speaking to him no less than six times before this. He called him from Haran to go to Canaan. He twice renewed covenant with him. He promised to give him Isaac, before he was born. He conversed with him concerning Ishmael. And could he not know the voice of God in this instance, as well as in all the other instances which have been mentioned? He had no doubt whether the command came from God or not; for it is said, "He rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place which God had told him."

This leads us to inquire,

III. Why God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son. It seems to be strange that God should require any man to sacrifice his child; and still more strange that God should require Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, whom he had given him in covenant love, and in the same covenant had promised to bestow upon him and upon his posterity great and distinguish-

ing blessings. Though God knew that the command must tenderly and painfully affect the heart of Abraham, yet it does not appear that he gave it as a mark of his displeasure, or as a punishment for any deviation from duty. And though God gave no reason to Abraham why he required him to sacrifice his son, yet we must suppose he had some good reason for laying such a peculiar command upon him. It is evident that Abraham's offering Isaac upon the altar, was a lively type or representation of God's offering Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. There was a great resemblance between Isaac and Christ. Isaac's birth was miraculous, and so was Christ's. Isaac was a beloved son, and so was Christ. Isaac was about thirty-three years old when he was offered upon the altar, and so was Christ when he was made a sacrifice for sin. Isaac carried the wood for sacrifice, and so did Christ carry his cross. Isaac was bound upon the altar, and so was Christ fastened to the cross. Isaac voluntarily offered up himself, and so did Christ. It is very probable that Abraham viewed Isaac as a type of Christ; for we read that he saw Christ's day and rejoiced. And when is it more likely that he saw Christ's day, than when he offered Isaac? And this seems to be confirmed by the promise which immediately followed, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed.

But whether one design God had in view, in commanding Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, was to make him a type of Christ, or not; we are assured that he had another very important design in view. And what that design was, we are told in the verse before the text. "And it came to pass, after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham! And he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son," &c. By tempting here, we are to understand the same as trying or proving. God meant, by the command in the text, to try or prove whether Abraham loved him sincerely and supremely. Such a command to sacrifice his son, was directly calculated to draw forth the real feelings of Abraham's heart towards God; and to try, and prove, and infallibly determine, whether he loved God more than his son, or any other object upon the face of the earth. This was trying the sincerity of Abraham, just as he allowed Satan to try the sincerity of Job. This trial of Abraham's affection, therefore, appears to have been the principal, if not the only end God had in view, in commanding Abraham to offer his son a burnt offering on the altar. It only remains to inquire,

IV. Whether this command to Abraham answered the end which God proposed in giving it. And we find that Abraham did actually and punctually obey both the letter and spirit of

the command; by which he gave an infallible evidence that he loved God sincerely and supremely. He rose up early in the morning, and set out upon his journey, which he continued unto the third day, when he arrived at the place which God had told him of. There he built an altar, and laid wood in order and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood, and stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But at that moment, "the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham! And he said, here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Now we must be fully convinced that by this act of obedience, Abraham gave an infallible evidence of his sincere and supreme love to God, if we consider,

1. That he obeyed, in contrariety to all the natural feelings and affections of the human heart. In many cases, natural affections and selfish motives may induce mankind to pay an external obedience to the divine commands; but in this case, we can see no room for the operation of these sinister motives. The command itself was directly calculated to awaken every natural passion, and selfish feeling, in opposition to obedience.

As soon as Abraham heard the dread command, what a crowd of difficulties must have started up in his mind, and forbidden him to obey! What a conflict must he have had between love to God, and love to himself, and his son! Every circumstance of the action which he was required to do, was extremely self denying and painful. To have sacrificed any other man's son, would have been a hard task. To have sacrificed Ishmael, or any other of his children, would have been a harder task. To have sacrificed Isaac, whom he most tenderly loved, and who was the object of his highest hopes according to the promises of God, would have been far more distressing, even if he had been allowed to do it at home, surrounded by his family and friends. But he was commanded to go to a distant, unknown, dreary wilderness, and there offer up the son of his love and highest hopes, a burnt offering. It is hardly possible to conceive that his trial could

have been carried to any higher degree. But this trial he cheerfully and patiently endured. Ye have heard of the patience of Job; but was it equal to the patience and submission of Abraham? The evidence of the sincerity and supremacy of his love to God, rises in proportion to the number and magnitude of the difficulties and obstacles which stood in the way of his obedience.

2. The cheerfulness and promptitude with which he obeyed the divine command, increase the evidence of the sincerity and supremacy of his love to God. Good men have often shown reluctance to obeying self denying commands. Moses and Aaron were reluctant to bear the divine messages to Pharaoh, and begged to be excused. Jonah dreaded to go to Nineveh, and denounce the judgments of God against that city, and actually disobeyed the divine command. But we have no account that Abraham stood a moment hesitating whether he should obey the hard injunction laid upon him, or so much as pleading to be excused from performing the appalling and self denying act of sacrificing his son. Such promptitude and alacrity in obedience, eminently displayed the purity, strength and ardor of his love to God. His supreme love to God seemed to banish every selfish affection from his heart, which rendered the trial an infallible evidence of his sincerity. If he had harbored any selfish feelings at that time, they would most certainly have manifested themselves by reluctance, murmuring, or complaint. It must be farther observed,

3. That his obedience to the command to sacrifice his son, was obedience to the mere will of God; which renders it, in the highest possible degree, evidential of his real and supreme love to him. God assigned no reason for his command, and he could see no reason for it, but many plain and powerful reasons against it. There was nothing to induce him to obey, but a full conviction that the command came from God, was expressive of his pleasure, and clothed with his authority. Some of the divine commands carry their own reasons with them, why they should be obeyed. And in other cases, he condescends to give reasons why his commands should be obeyed; and such reasons serve to excite a prompt and cheerful obedience. But in the command given to Abraham, God gave no reasons why he should obey it, but simply his sovereign will. And to this will, Abraham paid the most prompt and cheerful obedience; which was the highest possible evidence that he could give, that his will, like Christ's, was swallowed up in the divine will. This was carrying his obedience to the highest pitch, and laid a just foundation for God to transmit his

character to all future generations, under the noblest appellation, the *Friend of God.* Thus God completely accomplished his design in his command to Abraham.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from Abraham's ready obedience to the command in the text, that those who are willing to obey God, can very easily understand the real meaning of his commands. God's command to Abraham was a very singular and self denying command, but he found no difficulty in understanding its plain, but important meaning. His willingness to obey God in the most self denying manner, made him willing to understand his command in the most self denying sense. He knew that God had a right to require him to deny himself, in respect to any thing and every thing that he had given him; and therefore might, if he saw good reason for it, require him to sacrifice any one of his children, and even Isaac his beloved child. Accordingly he felt no disposition to stand and hesitate whether the command came from God; or whether it was contrary to the nature of things; or whether it was inconsistent with other commands he had given him; or whether it was inconsistent with the promises he had made to him; or whether it was kind in him to require such an extraordinary act of self denial. He knew the plain meaning of the words of the command, and was willing to obey it in the most self denying sense. This willingness to obey, was the cause of his willingness to understand it in its proper meaning. And this is the case of those who are willing to obey God, that they are equally willing to understand his commands in his word, which require the greatest self denial. But those who have not the love of God in them, find great difficulty in understanding the most self denying duties and doctrines of the gospel. They find great difficulty in understanding the doctrine of total selfishness, the doctrine of disinterested love, the doctrine of unconditional submission, the doctrine of renouncing the world, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of vindictive justice, and the doctrine of endless punishment for impenitence and unbelief. And those who undertake to explain and preach the word of God, find great difficulty in explaining such texts as teach such self denying doctrines. And where will you find an expositor, who does not labor to soften and explain away the self denying duties and doctrines contained in the Bible? This difficulty of understanding the doctrines and duties of divine revelation, principally arises from an unwillingness to believe and do what God requires.

This was the cause why sinners could not understand what Christ taught them. And to this cause he ascribes it. "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word." To this cause it is owing, that so many complain that they cannot understand those who preach the self denying duties and doctrines, in their plain and full meaning. They are unwilling to do what God requires.

2. Did Abraham exhibit the highest evidence of his sincere and supreme love to God, by obedience to his command? Then we learn that this is the only way for all good men to exhibit the highest evidence of their sincere and supreme love to God. Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence that creatures can exhibit of their sincere and supreme love to him. The angels in heaven never have exhibited, and never can exhibit any higher evidence of their pure, sincere love to God, than their cordial and cheerful obedience to his will. When God meant that Abraham should exhibit the highest evidence of his sincere love to him, he proposed a certain act of obedience; and by performing that act, he exhibited the highest evidence of his supreme love to his Maker. God says to him, "Now I know that thou fearest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Our Saviour made obedience to him, the infallible test and highest evidence of true love to him. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." It is by obedience, that good men exhibit the highest evidence to the world that they love God. Though Abraham professed to love God, yet he never exhibited so high an evidence of it, as when, in obedience to him, he offered up his son. And though christians may have the love of God in their hearts, yet they cannot exhibit evidence of it, without obedience to the divine commands. And it is by obedience, that christians exhibit the highest evidence to themselves that their love to God is sincere and supreme. Abraham exhibited higher evidence to himself that he loved God supremely, by offering up his son, than he ever did before. Men often think that they are willing to do that beforehand, which they find themselves unwilling to do, when they come to the trial. Most who make a profession of religion, probably think that they shall be willing to do all that they engage to do; but how often do they find that their resolutions and hearts fail them! So it is especially with young converts. They imagine that they shall always be willing to obey every divine command, and perform every self denying duty. But it is only by actual obedience, that they find the nature and strength of their love to God.

3. It appears from the obedience of Abraham to the divine

command, that all true obedience to God flows from pure disinterested love to him. God has set his seal upon Abraham's obedience, as being genuine, and acceptable to him. But it abundantly appears from what has been said, that his obedience flowed from pure disinterested love. He obeyed the mere will of God, without the least regard to his own interest, but in apparent opposition to it. His own apparent interests all plead for disobedience. But he gave up the objects which lay the nearest to his heart. He gave up his son whom he loved, and all the promises of good which centered in him. He was willing, if God required it, not only to give up his son, but his posterity, though numerous as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea shore. We know no man who had so much to give up as Abraham; but he gave all that he had, which is the utmost that Christ or God ever required. Abraham's love was not only without interest, but contrary to interest, which justly denominates it disinterested. Moses felt and expressed the same disinterested love, when he gave up all the treasures of Egypt, and cheerfully consented to suffer affliction with the people of God; and when he was willing to have his name blotted out of the book of life, if it might be the cause of saving his nation from ruin. Paul felt and expressed the same disinterested love, in wishing for the salvation of the Jews. Christ came not to do his own will, but the will of his Father; and displayed more disinterested love in dying on the cross, than Abraham did in giving up his son, or than Isaac did in giving up his life. Christ taught his followers to exercise no other than disinterested love; not to love those only that love them, but even those who hate them. And Paul declared that he should have no reason to think that he was a real christian, if he did not exercise that love or charity which seeketh not her own. According to the whole tenor of scripture, there can be no true obedience to the divine commands, which does not flow from disinterested love.

4. It appears from God's design in giving the command in the text, and from the effects of it, that christians have no reason to think it strange concerning the fiery trials which they are called to endure. God has a good design in all their trials. He means to do that which they desire him to do. David prayed that God would try him. All christians desire that God would try them, in order that they may know whether their love is selfish or benevolent, and how far it is selfish. By trials God means to give them an opportunity to know their hearts. And he has another end to answer by trying them; and that is, to give them an opportunity to manifest the reality, beauty and importance of true religion before the eyes of the world. Abra-

ham's trial and obedience has exhibited, and will continue to exhibit, the nature, beauty and importance of true religion, through the whole world, and to the end of time. Christians, by patiently and submissively suffering affliction, do great good in the world, and more good very often than they could do in days of prosperity.

5. This subject calls upon all who hope they are pious, to examine themselves by the criterion God has given in the obedience of Abraham. The question to be proposed and answered is, whether they do the works of Abraham. Christ told the Jews that if they were the children of Abraham, they would do the works of Abraham. And his works flowed from disinterested love. You are not so much to inquire whether you labor six days in the week, as why you labor. You are not so much to inquire whether you attend public worship one day in seven, as why you attend. You are not so much to inquire whether you do good to others, as why you do it. You are not so much to inquire whether you love God, as why you love him. You are to inquire into the nature of all your religious affections. And this you may very easily determine, by the examples of real piety recorded for your instruction in the word of God. If your religious affections do not lead you to universal and disinterested obedience to the will of God, your faith and hope and love are false.

The supreme and final Judge has declared, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven."

SERMON XXVII.

THE HEARTS OF SINNERS KNOWN TO GOD.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. 1 John, iii. 20.

Since there is an essential distinction between saints and sinners, it is of great importance that both should know their peculiar character. Saints are those who have been born of God, and are the children of God; but sinners are those who have not been born of God, and are under the entire dominion of an unholy heart. In order, therefore, that saints may know that they are saints, and that sinners may know that they are sinners, the apostle describes the peculiar character and conduct of saints, and the peculiar character and conduct of sinners, in a very plain and intelligible manner. And then he tells them that they both may know whether they have been born of God, and are the children of God, or not, by the description he has given of saints and sinners. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." The plain meaning of the apostle is this. If those who call themselves christians, are conscious of having such exercises of heart as belong to the Christian character, they may know that they are the children of God; but if they are conscious of having directly contrary affections of heart, they may know that they are not the children of God, but are in the state of nature, and dead in sin. For if their conscience condemn them, God, who knoweth all things, does certainly condemn them as graceless sinners. This amounts to saying,

That God knows the hearts of sinners better than they do themselves.

Sinners know something about their own hearts, otherwise they would never feel self condemned; but they do not know so much about them as they might know; for they endeavor to misinform, or silence conscience, which would, if properly consulted and allowed to speak, condemn them for every evil imagination of their evil hearts. Conscience always judges of the moral exercises of the heart according to evidence. This sinners know; and therefore to prevent its bringing in a verdict against them, they either misinform it, or neglect to consult it. Open, profligate, hardened sinners restrain conscience from speaking, and stifle all sense of remorse and self condemnation. Moral sinners take a different course, and endeavor to pacify conscience by their amiable conduct and sophistical reasoning, as Paul did before his conversion. He made his conscience believe that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, and that he was doing God service while he was persecuting the church of Christ. By some such means as these, sinners try to live in ignorance of their own hearts; and all secure sinners generally attain their object; though it is true that their hearts sometimes condemn them, notwithstanding all their efforts to ward off convictions. No sinners, however, whether moral or immoral, whether secure or awakened, know so much about their own hearts as God does, who is greater than their hearts, and knows all things. For,

1. God has a more extensive view of the exercises of their hearts, than they ever have. "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations of the thoughts." He knows their down sitting and up rising. He understands their thoughts afar off. He compasses their paths, and is acquainted with all their ways. He knows all that passes in their hearts and drops from their lips, every moment. They have a multitude of moral exercises, of which they take no notice while passing through their minds; and many of those of which they do take notice, they soon forget. So that when they endeavor to recollect the past exercises of their hearts, it is but a very small number of the whole that they can possibly remember. Who can recollect all his internal exercises, and external actions, for days, for weeks, for months, for years past? The minds of men are too weak and feeble to take such an extensive view of their hearts and lives. But God not only sees and marks all the thoughts, words and actions of every sinner, but remembers them all. This is what all sinners are extremely prone to forget, for which God justly blames them. Though they cannot remember all their sins, yet they ought to remem-

ber that God remembers them all. Hence he complains of them, and says, "They do not consider in their hearts, that I remember all their wickedness." But even God could not remember all the wickedness of sinners, if he did not remember all the exercises of their hearts, and all the motives of their conduct, through every moment of their lives. If these were all reckoned up, they would amount to an immense multitude, more than the old, or even the young, could enumerate and distinctly comprehend. Though this be not possible with men, yet it is possible with God, who numbers the hairs of our heads, and the stars of heaven, and calls them by their proper names. It is, therefore, a very serious and interesting truth, which sinners are capable of understanding and remembering, that God knows and remembers all the moral exercises of their hearts, and, consequently, all their wickedness in thought, word and deed. His knowledge of their hearts is, therefore, unspeakably more extensive than their own.

2. God sees all the moral exercises of their hearts at one intuitive and comprehensive view; which is a far more perfect knowledge of them than they ever have. They gain all the knowledge they have of their hearts, gradually and slowly, which renders it extremely imperfect. They cannot trace the whole series of their moral exercises intuitively and spontaneously. The most that they can do is, to recollect some of the exercises of their hearts, which they have had at different times, and under different circumstances. They may possibly recollect some of the moral views and exercises which they had in childhood, some which they had in youth, some which they had in manhood, and some which they have had in later periods of life. But after all, they can recall but a very few of the innumerable thoughts, purposes and affections, which have occupied and gained the attention of their hearts. And even this interrupted and disconnected view of their hearts, they have gained gradually and slowly, which can give them but a very faint and imperfect knowledge of their whole moral character. But God, who looks not merely on the outward appearance, but on the heart, sees the whole connected train of all their internal views and feelings, as well as external actions. Their thoughts, and of course their intentions, volitions, and actions, have run in a train. One thought has led to another thought, one volition to another volition, and one action to another action, through the whole course of their lives. They have never had one solitary unconnected thought, nor one solitary unconnected intention, nor done one solitary unconnected action. A certain, though not always a perceptible connection, has run through all their thoughts, intentions, words and actions. God

sees all the links in this mental chain, at one intuitive and comprehensive view; and the hearts of sinners, as composed of this combination of moral exercises, appear very different from what they do to sinners themselves, who do not see, or overlook this connection in their thoughts, words and actions. They are ready to imagine that they only now and then have an evil thought, or an evil intention, or do an evil action. But God sees their whole hearts at once, which are full of evil and nothing but evil, and which produce a constant and connected course of evil conduct. He knows, therefore, a vast deal more about their hearts, than they do themselves.

3. God knows the moral quality of all the exercises which compose the hearts of sinners, as well as their connection with each other, and with the external actions which flow from them. This God claims as his peculiar prerogative. "I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Though sinners have a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be; though all the exercises of their hearts are selfish and criminal; and though they have a conscience which can distinguish the moral quality of all their moral exercises; yet they are extremely ignorant of the entire criminality of their selfish hearts. They are so far from consulting conscience with respect to the nature of their moral exercises, that they are not willing that it should do its office, but restrain it from distinguishing and condemning their selfish exercises. If they would consult conscience in respect to the motives of their conduct, it would always tell them that they are selfish and sinful. But as they generally neglect and silence conscience, they generally think that the most of their moral exercises and motives are good. It is only when they externally neglect what God expressly requires, or externally do what God expressly forbids, that they charge themselves with guilt. At all other times, and in all other cases, they consider themselves as innocent, if not virtuous. Paul lived so; the Pharisee that went to the temple to pray, lived so; Judas probably lived so, while he followed Christ with his other disciples; and the very worst of sinners generally live so. They think they generally do right, and that they only now and then do wrong, and act from selfish and sinful motives. But how different is this view of their hearts and conduct from that which God has of them! He views all their moral exercises and motives of action, as constantly and perfectly selfish and sinful. He sees every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, as they rise in their minds, to be evil, and only evil continually. He knows that they never feel right, nor act right, in

a single instance. He knows, better than any other being, the essential difference between selfishness and benevolence, virtue and vice, holiness and unholiness. As he always sees all the moral exercises in the hearts of sinners, so he always marks the moral quality of every one of their moral exercises. He never mistakes selfishness for benevolence, nor mere natural affections for holy affections. He knows and condemns all the moral exercises of sinners, as totally selfish and criminal. Sinners always wish to hide their hearts from God, and from their own consciences. They imagine they have a thousand good exercises of heart, but God knows they have none. He knows their hearts, therefore, infinitely better than they do themselves.

4. God knows how vile and guilty sinners are, for all the evil exercises of their hearts which they inwardly cherish, and outwardly express. Though their own conscience tells them that they are guilty, and more or less condemns them for their sinful exercises of heart, whether they act them out or not; yet they are far from having a clear and adequate idea of the great criminality and guilt of every evil affection and emotion of their hearts. They view a multitude of their sinful thoughts, words and actions as mere venial evils, which do no hurt, and deserve no blame. They make a mock at what they deem small sins, and blame themselves only for great overt acts of wickedness, which are visible and reproachful in the eyes of the world. They have, perhaps, no sense of guilt for one of a thousand of their internal transgressions. But God, who looks directly on their hearts, sees all their vain and sinful thoughts, intentions and designs, and condemns them all, whether they ever do, or do not express them in their external conduct. The history of every sinner's heart, could it be written, would appear very different from the history of his life. This secret, unwritten history, God reads every moment. He views no sins as small, though he views some vastly greater than others. Sin and guilt are inseparably connected; and the greater the sin, the greater is the guilt, or ill desert attached to it. God is the only being in the universe who knows how to weigh the sins of men in a perfectly just and even balance, and exactly to measure the guilt of every sinful thought, word and action. He views the least sin as unspeakably more vile and guilty than sinners do the greatest. He views every selfish exercise of the heart as diametrically opposed to every benevolent exercise of the heart, and as having a direct or indirect tendency to destroy all good; and, therefore, as being more criminal than any created being can conceive. The first selfish affection in the heart of Lucifer had an indirect if not a direct

tendency to produce rebellion in heaven. And we know that the first selfish affection in the human heart, did produce the apostacy of the whole human race. None but a being of perfect holiness and perfect knowledge, can justly and fully estimate the sinfulness of sin. Sinners are perfectly selfish, and love selfishness. God is perfectly benevolent, and loves benevolence. He is the only being who is perfectly disposed, and perfectly capable of distinguishing every selfish exercise of heart from every benevolent affection of heart. And as he sees all the exercises in the hearts of sinners to be entirely selfish, so he views their hearts, in respect to criminality and guilt, infinitely different from what they do themselves. Indeed, he views them more guilty for every one of their sins, than they do for all their sins together.

5. God knows all the evils which the corrupt hearts of sinners would prompt them to do, if he did not continually restrain them. They are ready to think that their hearts are no worse than their lives, because they judge of their hearts by their external actions. They are all conscious that they do not act so bad, as they have natural power and capacity to act. They extenuate the badness of their hearts, by the good things they do and the evil things they refrain from doing. The moral sinner exults in the thought that he is not as many others are, but much more harmless and circumspect in the general course of his life. The vicious sinner imagines he has no more corruption of heart, than he discovers by his irregular conduct. Neither of them is disposed to reflect upon the innumerable evils which his wicked heart has prompted him to do, and which he would have done, if God had not laid his restraints upon him. We know of some instances, in which God has restrained men from acting out the corruption of their hearts. He restrained Esau from destroying his brother Jacob and his family. He restrained David from imbruing his hands in the blood of Nabal. And he restrained those from effecting their purpose, who bound themselves by an oath to kill Paul. We have reason to think that he does, in ten thousand instances, restrain wicked men from the evils they would do, if he did not internally, or externally restrain them. He knows their thoughts afar off, and long before they rise in their hearts; and he can, in innumerable ways unknown and unperceived by them, alter their purposes, or restrain them from action. Though a man's heart deviseth his way, yet the Lord always directs his steps. But the restraints which God lays upon the hearts of sinners, do not destroy, nor even diminish the guilt of their sinful thoughts, desires, and designs. Sinners appear vastly less

guilty to themselves and to the world than they do to God, who searches and tries and condemns all the evil exercises of their hearts, which they would have acted out, if he had not effectually restrained them. How many more great and tremendous calamities would have fallen upon the world, than have fallen upon it, if God had not restrained the selfishness, the pride, the malice and revenge, which has actually existed in the totally depraved hearts of men, and which has never been acted out, by reason of divine restraints! It is owing to a secret and powerful influence, which God exercises over the minds of moral sinners, that they are not immoral. It is owing to the same kind of divine influence over immoral sinners, that they are not more immoral than they are; and that they do so many things which are useful to the world, instead of detrimental. Some of the most profane and profligate sinners, as well as some of the most regular and moral sinners, are very instrumental in promoting the safety, the peace and prosperity of the nation to which they belong, and of the country in which they live. But still, the hearts of both moral and immoral sinners are full of evil; and they all pursue one steady, constant, persevering course of sinning. And though they construe all their useful and beneficial conduct into virtue, yet God construes all their manual and mental service into sin. He judges of their external conduct by their hearts, and not their hearts by their conduct. He knows that their hearts are fully set in them to do evil, and nothing but evil; and that it is owing to his controlling and restraining influence, that they do so much apparent good, and no more apparent evil. He knows what exercises of their hearts he controls, and what exercises of their hearts he restrains; and he knows that all the exercises he controls, and all that he restrains, are entirely selfish and sinful. He views their hearts, therefore, as infinitely more sinful and odious than they view them. I may add,

6. God knows the extreme obstinacy of their hearts, which they are unwilling to know, and of which they are generally very ignorant. God knows how often and how much they have refused to obey his commands, his gracious invitations, his kind admonitions, and his awful threatenings. God knows how often and how much they have resisted the strivings of his Spirit. God knows how often and how much they have despised and abused the light and instruction, which has been poured into their minds by the preaching of the gospel. And he knows how often and how much they have disregarded parental authority, instruction and restraint. There is nothing that serves so much to harden their hearts, and aggravate their guilt, as their abuse of such various and powerful means as

God uses to bring them to repentance. Christ said of the Jews, who disregarded and rejected the light and instruction which he gave them, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my Father." And again he said, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." God said of the sinners in Zion, They are stout hearted, and far from righteousness. They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts sent by his prophets. Though sinners forget, yet God remembers and knows all the light they have refused to see, all the instructions they have refused to hear, all the strivings of the Spirit which they have resisted, and every thing which has served to harden their hearts and aggravate their guilt. God keeps his eye constantly fixed on the hearts of sinners; and observes all their feelings and conduct under the light of the gospel, the dispensations of providence, and the common and special influences of his Spirit, and marks all the degrees of their obstinacy and guilt. How infinitely different then, must their hearts appear in his sight from what they do in their own? They never see all their sins in their number, in their nature, in their tendency, and in their great and innumerable aggravations. Though they know that their hearts sometimes condemn them, yet they refuse to know that God, who perfectly knows their hearts at all times and in all respects, always condemns them.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. In the view of this subject, we may see why sinners generally live so little concerned about their guilty and dangerous state by nature. Though their conscience sometimes awakens their attention to their hearts, which condemn them, yet they soon stifle the voice of conscience, and recover their habitual peace and tranquility of mind. They either bribe conscience by their good deeds, or sear it by their bad ones; and in either case, they flatter themselves that their hearts are pretty good, if not so good as they ought to be. But if they only saw their hearts as God sees them, they would be instantly alarmed, and all their peace and flattering hopes would forsake them. The truth of the case is, they do not view all the exercises of their

hearts as either selfish, or criminal. They do not believe that their hearts are totally depraved, and entirely selfish and criminal, and that all their actions flow from selfish and sinful motives. They have a better opinion of themselves than to think that all their desires and designs are mean and mercenary. They have made themselves to believe that they generally act from innocent and laudable motives. They have no thought that the common exercises of their hearts are altogether selfish; that they neither fear God, nor regard man in their common labors and pursuits; and that it is real selfishness to seek their own private, personal, separate interest, unless they positively injure their neighbor or somebody else. They see no harm in mere selfishness, or seeking their own happiness solely and supremely, without regard to the glory of God, and the good of mankind. If they labor six days in the week and rest on the Sabbath from their own service and the service of God, they think they are very innocent; or if they attend public worship to gratify their curiosity, or to be seen of men, they think they are quite virtuous, and praiseworthy. So long as they can thus keep themselves ignorant of the entire selfishness and criminality of their hearts, they can maintain their carnal ease and security, and disregard all God knows and has told them in his word, concerning their criminality and danger. It seems strange, indeed, that they can live in so much ignorance of the depravity of their own hearts, which, if they would attend to it, would continually condemn them; but it is not strange that they should be thoughtless and unconcerned about their danger and guilt, while they feel no guilt, and see no danger. They employ the very means which God uses to awaken them, to stupify their conscience and harden their hearts. They misimprove and abuse the goodness, forbearance and long suffering of God, which ought to lead them to repentance. They misemploy their rational powers and faculties, in misconstruing and perverting the great truths of the gospel. They shut their eyes, stop their ears, and harden their hearts against the most solemn warnings and admonitions of Providence. They say to God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "They say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." They love darkness rather than light; and their way is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble. They say they shall have peace, though they walk in the imaginations of their hearts. The ways of their hearts appear safe, as well as pleasant. It is the ignorance of their own hearts, that keeps so many totally depraved and guilty sinners

in a state of ease, security and presumption. And until this ignorance is by some means removed, nothing can prevent their running in the broad road to destruction.

2. This subject shows us why awakened sinners are often in so much anxiety and distress about the salvation of their souls. It is because they begin to see their hearts in the same light in which God sees them, and represents them in his word. He has told them that they are by nature dead in trespasses and sins; that every imagination of the thoughts of their heart, is evil and only evil continually; that their hearts are full of evil, and fully set in them to do evil; that they are of their father the devil, possess his spirit, and are under his influence; that there is none righteous among them, no, not one; that they have all gone out of the way, and become unprofitable; and that they have always been enemies to all righteousness. This description of their hearts they find to be true, when their conscience is awakened, and their eyes are opened, to see the selfishness and criminality of all their voluntary exercises and actions. Such a conviction of the total corruption of their hearts, and sinfulness of their lives, fills their souls with extreme anguish and distress. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" God is able to make the most stout hearted stoop, under a clear view of their total depravity and guilt; and he has often done it. He gave this conviction to three thousand one day, and to five thousand another. Paul, who was alive without the law once, found himself dead in trespasses and sins. Simon, the sorcerer, who was thought to be, and who thought himself to be, the great power of God, was thrown into the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, by the bare words of Peter. When the divine Spirit opens the eyes of sinners to see their own hearts in a true light, they find that they are as selfish and sinful as God has represented them to be; and that all their efforts to get out of the hands of divine sovereignty are vain and hopeless. They find themselves bound over to eternal destruction, by their carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. They find that nothing can slay the enmity of their hearts, and break the cords of their iniquity, but the irresistible grace of God, who has a right and power to save or destroy them. Many have found themselves in this helpless and hopeless condition, and anxiously cried, "What must we do to be saved." And all sinners will sooner or later find that the condemnation of their hearts will fill them with insupportable consternation and guilt. Though they are now pleased with their hearts, and rejoice that they are able to guard them against the arrows of conviction, which are often

pointed at them; yet the time will come, when they must see them as God sees them, and know that God sees them; and when that time comes, all their false confidence, false joy, and false hopes will perish, and draw after them a load of guilt, sufficient to sink them in temporary, if not in eternal sorrow. This danger is not visionary. It has been seen and felt. And it may be seen and felt here, by those who most ardently wish to put far away what they deem an evil day. But it would be a great mercy, if God would soon bow the heavens, and come down, and appear in his glory, in awakening the consciences and subduing the hearts of sinners in this place. It seems as though it were time for God to take his own work into his own hands, and plead his own cause, when so many make void his law.

3. This subject shows why sinners are so ready to believe that God will not make them, nor any others of mankind, for ever miserable. They all think what some say and teach, that no sinners deserve eternal punishment. The reason is, that they have never seen their own hearts in the same light in which God has seen them. They have never believed that their hearts are totally depraved, and that they have never had a good desire, a good design, nor done one good action; that they have never done any thing but sin ever since they were capable of sinning; that their whole lives have been one continual series of transgressions, in thought, word and deed; that the reason why they have not done a thousand times more evil than they have done, is, because God has restrained them; and that they never intend to cease sinning as long as they live, and as long as they exist, notwithstanding all the precepts, prohibitions, invitations, admonitions and threatenings God has given them. If they viewed their hearts and lives in this light, would they not think that they deserved to be punished, and to be punished for ever? Those who have seen their hearts and lives in this light, have believed and felt that they deserved to be punished, and that for ever. And the same persons believe that other sinners have the same totally depraved hearts that they have had, and that they have lived the same totally sinful lives that they have lived, and therefore deserve to be punished not only in time, but to all eternity. The only reason, then, why impenitent sinners are so ready to believe that God will not make them or any of mankind for ever miserable is, because they have never seen the plague of their own hearts, in that true light in which God sees them, and they might, and will sooner or later, see them. Let any sinner see his own heart in a true light, and be fully convinced that it has been, and still is, fully set in him to do evil, and nothing but evil, as

long as he lives, and as long as he exists; and he will be ready to pass judgment upon himself, that he deserves to feel the weight of God's displeasure, and of the displeasure of all holy beings for ever. If sinners did but see and feel the total depravity and enmity of their hearts, they would tremble like Belshazzar in the belief and fear of future and eternal misery.

4. It appears from what has been said, that it is of great importance to preach the doctrine of total depravity plainly and fully. It carries no conviction to sinners to be told that they are the offspring of Adam, are by nature depraved, and have actually sinned, and come short of the glory of God. They are willing to believe and allow this; but then they are ready to think and say this is true of the best men in the world. They are all the offspring of Adam, they are by nature depraved, and they actually sin, and come short of the glory of God. They are no better than we; and why should God save them, and not us? The doctrine of total depravity gives a complete answer. Though the best men are depraved, yet they are not totally depraved. Though they sometimes sin, yet they do not always sin. They do something besides sinning. They love God, which sinners never do. They repent of sin, which sinners never do. They believe in Christ, which sinners never do. They promote the glory of God, which sinners never do. They desire and intend to promote the glory of God as long as they live, and as long as they exist. Though they are like sinners, yet they are essentially different from them. They are not totally depraved, but sinners are. They are not total enemies to God, but sinners are. They are not totally unfit for the services and enjoyments of heaven, but sinners are. And they are not properly fit for destruction, but sinners, in respect to guilt, enmity and opposition to God and all good, are completely fit for spiritual and eternal death. As there is this essential distinction between saints and sinners, it is of great importance that it should be made to appear to both. But nothing can make it appear, but the truth of the total depravity of sinners. Unless preachers clearly and fully prove this truth, it is impossible for them to prove that there is an essential distinction between saints and sinners. Those, therefore, who deny, or neglect to preach total depravity, never do teach their hearers that sinners are essentially different from saints. Though they use the terms saints and sinners, yet they seldom attempt to tell wherein they differ; and when they undertake to describe the difference, they only say that saints are better than sinners, or that sinners do more evil than good, but saints do more good than evil. Accordingly, when they speak of regeneration, which they seldom do, they call it a gradual,

and not an instantaneous change. They suppose sinners have some goodness, but saints have more; which leaves both saints and sinners in a state of uncertainty whether they are saints or sinners, the friends or enemies of God; and they must remain in this uncertainty as long as they live; for they cannot tell, nor any one else, how much goodness they must have to constitute them saints, and entitle them to the great and precious promises of the gospel. The doctrine of total depravity is one of the most essential doctrines of Christianity. The gospel cannot be clearly and consistently preached, either theoretically or practically to sinners, or to saints, without plainly explaining and proving the total depravity of sinners.

5. It appears from what has been said, that no sinners have a right to think they are christians. They all have the witness within themselves that they are totally depraved and graceless. Christ has told them that they have not the love of God in them; and the apostle has told them that they have a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. That this is true, all their moral exercises of heart, ever since they had any, unitedly prove. And if they would only look into their hearts, and view them as God views them, they could no more doubt of their total depravity and graceless state, than they could doubt of their own existence. Their moral exercises are essential parts of their existence, as much as their reason and conscience; and they can know as much about them as they know about any of their natural faculties. As they know what their reason and conscienee are, so they know what the free and the voluntary exercises of their hearts are. And they are conscious, when they reflect upon their past and present exercises of heart, that they have always loved themselves supremely, and not God; that they have always sought their own interests, and not the interests of others; that they have always desired happiness more than holiness; that they have always sought to please themselves, rather than to please God; and that they have always disliked, if not opposed, the divine commands, and the terms of the gospel. And the consciousness of such a constant, uninterrupted and persevering train of selfish and sinful affections, gives them plain, sensible, irresistible evidence that they are in the state of nature, and under the dominion of a totally selfish, wicked heart. This consciousness of self condemnation, the apostle represents as the infallible criterion by which sinners may know that they are totally depraved, absolutely graceless, and essentially different from the children of God. He declares, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." That is, he cannot

sin constantly as sinners do. "In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God." That is, whosoever never does righteousness, but always sins as sinners do. And again he says, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." Here the apostle asserts that all sinners may know that they are so, by the infallible testimony of their own heart. If their heart condemn them, they may assure themselves that God, who knows all things, and is perfectly acquainted with all the inward motions and affections of their hearts, knows and condemns them as totally sinful and graceless. No sinners, therefore, let them be ever so apparently amiable and virtuous, have a right to think they are christians, nor to doubt whether they are dead in trespasses and sins. There are a great many professedly doubting sinners, but they have no just ground to doubt. The case is clear in God's view, and ought to be in their own. Let them impartially ask their hearts, and they will tell them the truth, and justly condemn them for all their internal exercises and external actions.

6. It equally appears from what has been said, that christians have no right to think that they are sinners. Though they have been totally depraved, yet they are not now totally depraved. Though they have not yet attained, neither are already perfect, yet they desire to be perfect, and free from sin. Though, when they would do good, evil is present with them, and they often fail of that perfect obedience to the will of God which they are conscious they habitually desire to perform, yet they have the witness in themselves that their hearts have been changed, and that, whereas they were once blind, they now see; as they once hated God, they now love him; as they once disobeyed God, they now obey him; as they once loved their own interest more than his glory, they now seek his glory more than their own temporal or eternal good. Such holy exercises all real christians have; and these are the only criterion by which they are to assure themselves that they are of God, are his children, and heirs of eternal life. They have no right to disbelieve the witness which God has given them in their hearts, and set up another standard to try their spiritual state. Their own standard will always lead them astray; and they will refuse to be comforted in the way God has appointed to give them comfort. God gives to every christian evidence enough that he is born of the Spirit, if he would only seriously and impartially attend to it. This is true at the time he becomes a new creature, and

ever afterwards. No christians, therefore, have a right to think they are sinners, and have no title to the great and precious promises of the gospel. They ought to go on their way rejoicing in God, in prosperity and adversity; and even under the hiding of God's face. He requires them to rejoice in himself, always, and evermore. Christians are always to blame, if they think they are not the children of God.

Finally: In the view of this subject, all are called upon to judge righteous judgment with respect to their own hearts. The only criterion has been exhibited. It is the criterion proposed by the beloved disciple John, who tenderly and sincerely wished that both saints and sinners might know their own hearts. And if all who are now present would apply the criterion which the apostle has given them, there would not go away from this house one doubting christian, nor one doubting sinner.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD BINDS MEN TO BE HOLY.

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. — 1 Peter, i. 16.

This epistle is addressed to christians in general; and therefore its precepts and exhortations may be justly considered as applicable to christians in every age, as well as in every part of the world. It becomes christians now, as much as ever it did, to be holy in all manner of conversation, for the reason which the apostle assigns in the text. "Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." We find this written in Leviticus, xi. 44, where God says to his people, "I am the Lord your God; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves; and ye shall be holy, for I am holy." The same sentiment is expressed in several other passages in the Old Testament. But since all men are equally the creatures of God, and equally need his favor, this text equally applies to all men of all ages, characters and conditions; and equally proves the duty and necessity of one man's being holy as well as another. For if the holiness of God be a reason why one man should be holy, it is as good a reason why every man should be holy. The Creator's holiness lays all mankind under a moral obligation and necessity of being conformed to his moral image. Therefore we may understand God as saying to all men, without distinction, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Taking the words in this extensive sense, they suggest this important truth:

That God's being holy renders it absolutely necessary that men should be holy. I shall,

I. Show in what holiness consists.

II. That God is holy.

III. That this renders it absolutely necessary that men should be holy.

I. We are to consider in what holiness consists.

Holiness is a general term to express that goodness, or benevolence, which comprises every thing that is morally amiable and excellent. So that holiness properly means that love to God and man which the divine law requires, and all the moral exercises and affections that flow from it. Universal benevolence leads the subject of it to regard all beings according to their apparent worth and importance, and to seek their good according to the rank they hold in the scale of existence. This disposition will incline any being to treat himself and every other being perfectly right. For true benevolence is, in its own nature, universal, disinterested and impartial, and leads those who possess it to seek the highest good of the universe at large, whether this general good will involve their own good, or the good of other individuals, or not. Holiness, which essentially consists in pure love, lies not in the understanding, conscience, or any intellectual power or faculty, but in the heart, which is the seat of moral perfection in every moral agent. And this holiness of heart stands diametrically opposed to selfishness, which is the essence of all moral evil.

Having concisely stated the nature of holiness, I proceed to show,

II. That God is holy. The scripture every where ascribes holiness to the Deity. It calls him the Holy One, more than twenty times; and the Holy One of Israel, more than thirty times. It represents the church on earth as saying, "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods; who is like thee, glorious in holiness!" And it represents all the heavenly world as crying with joy, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." The scripture not only gives the epithet of holy to God, but represents his whole moral character as consisting in that pure love, or universal benevolence, which is the sum and comprehension of all holiness. We read, "God is love." That is, his whole moral excellence consists in love. We read, "God is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." That is, his love is universal. We read, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." That is, his love is impartial. We are told that when Moses requested God to show him his glory, he answered, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." And accordingly, "The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that

will by no means clear the guilty." Here God represents his goodness, or universal benevolence, as his supreme glory, and comprehensive of all his moral perfections, such as truth, justice, mercy and grace. Thus God is perfectly holy in heart; and this perfect holiness of heart renders all his character and conduct supremely holy. Here it may be proper to enter into particulars and observe,

1. God is holy in all his natural attributes. These are under the direction of his holy heart and always exercised in a holy manner. The almighty power of God is a natural attribute. But this is holy. He never exerts this attribute but in a holy manner, or to answer some holy and benevolent purpose. Hence his omnipotence is represented as a holy omnipotence. "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." The wisdom of God is one of his natural attributes, by which he is capable of forming the best designs and devising the best means of accomplishing them. This natural perfection is always under the influence of perfect holiness, and is never exercised to form any other but holy and benevolent purposes. It is said, "He is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Job demands, "Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?" Elihu says, "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity." The perfect holiness of God governs his unerring wisdom, and disposes him to devise and adopt none but perfectly holy, just and benevolent designs, which render his wisdom a perfectly holy wisdom. And for the same reason, his sovereignty is a holy sovereignty. Though he has a natural right to do what he will with his own, yet his perfect holiness renders it morally impossible for him to exercise his sovereignty in a manner contrary to the eternal rule of right. The Sovereign of the universe, who is perfectly holy, cannot do wrong. Though he may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he may destroy, yet in forming the vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath he exercises no other but a holy and benevolent sovereignty. Thus all the natural perfections of God are glorious in holiness.

2. God is holy in all his purposes, as well as in all his essential attributes. He designed from eternity to exert and display all the perfections of his nature. It was the benevolence of the Deity which prompted him to form any designs, and to pursue any course of external conduct. The great plan which he formed before the foundation of the world, is a scheme of perfect holiness, and designed to promote the largest measure of holiness in the universe that infinite wisdom and power can

produce. All his designs, strictly speaking, are only so many constituent parts or branches of his one great design. They all centre in the highest good of the intelligent universe. And this renders every one of his designs as really holy as another. They all originate in holiness, and tend to promote it.

3. God is holy in his word; which is an expression of his holy heart from beginning to end. All his commands are holy, just and good, and expressive of his love to holiness. His laws require nothing but holiness of mankind, and forbid nothing but what is unholy and sinful. His promises are all holy, and designed to manifest his cordial approbation of the holy affections of his dutiful creatures. All his threatenings are also holy, and designed to reveal his holy displeasure and wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. God has said nothing in his word but what flowed from a holy heart, and tends to promote some holy purpose. The whole word of God is perfectly holy, and adapted to promote holiness in the hearts and lives of all to whom it is given. Accordingly, Christ, in his prayer to his Father for his disciples, said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." And with this agree the declarations of David. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.—The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether."

4. God is holy in all his works. So says the Psalmist. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." The works of the Lord are great and numerous and wonderful; and all the fruits and effects of his holiness. God was holy in creating the heavens and the earth, and in forming angels and men. He was holy in calling into existence every created object. His holiness was as really concerned and displayed in creating things without holiness and without life, as in creating those which possess both. He created just so many creatures, of just such a nature, of just such a size, and of just such a duration, as would best subserve the purposes of his holiness. He made every thing in weight and in measure, and his holiness determined what these should be. He made nothing to no purpose, and nothing to an ill purpose. He had a holy, benevolent and important purpose in every thing he made. And though all things that he has made are not holy, yet he is holy in making all things.

This leads me to observe farther, that God is holy in governing whatever he has made. He upholds and directs all things by his constant and powerful agency. He causes the regular

succession of day and night, summer and winter, seed time and harvest. He hears the young ravens when they cry, and satisfies the desires and supplies the wants of every living creature. He fixes the bounds of every one's habitation, and orders all the circumstances of human life. In a word, he exercises a universal providence over all his works. And he is holy, as well as wise and powerful, in his universal government. As the work of redemption is the most glorious and important of all his works, so he displays the most holiness in carrying it on. To this work he makes all his other works subservient. For the sake of bringing home many sons unto glory, and making them perfectly holy, he has given his Son to suffer and die on the cross; published the gospel of his grace; appointed man to preach it; and set apart a day to hear it; while at the same time he operates on the human heart to produce the effect he designs. He opens the hearts of some to receive it, and shuts the hearts of others against it. And in doing all this, he acts from the same holy and benevolent design which he had in view in forming the great scheme of redemption, and in choosing the subjects of his grace, from the early days of eternity. His holy heart governs all his conduct, in the works of creation, providence and grace. Thus he is perfectly and universally holy, in all his affections, in all his attributes, in all his laws, and in all his works. It now remains to show,

III. That, since God is holy, it highly concerns men to be holy. This is the reason he gives for commanding them to be holy. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." The perfect holiness of the Deity lays all mankind under a moral obligation and necessity of being conformed to his holy and amiable character. This will appear from various considerations.

1. It is absolutely necessary that men should be holy, in order to discover the supreme excellence and glory of a holy God. Holiness is the supreme glory and perfection of the Deity; but without holiness no man can see his supreme beauty and moral excellence. It is impossible that those who are wholly destitute of every holy and benevolent feeling, should know how a holy and benevolent being feels. This is the general representation of scripture. Our Lord says, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The apostle John says, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." And the apostle Paul says on the one hand, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And on the other hand he says, that those who are rooted and grounded in love, are able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,

and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Men must possess real holiness, in order to see the beauty of holiness in the divine character. But as soon as they become holy as God is holy, they can discern the beauty and glory of divine holiness. "For love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." Without such a peculiar knowledge of the only true God, none can inherit eternal life.

2. It is absolutely necessary that men should be holy, in order to obey a holy God. This we are expressly told in his word. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And when the unholy Israelites publicly said, "We will serve the Lord," Joshua told them, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God." The laws of a holy God are all holy, and require holiness and nothing but holiness. Hence Christ represents holy love, or universal benevolence, as comprising all the duty and obedience which God requires of men. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." And the apostle says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." So long as men are destitute of love, or true holiness, they can do nothing which is the least obedience to the holy commands of a holy God. Every command of God requires men to feel like himself, or to be holy as he is holy. The reason why men should love their enemies, bless them that curse them, and do good to them that hate them, is, that they may be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect. Obedience always implies conformity of heart to the will of another. All obedience to God, therefore, implies conformity of heart to his holy will, expressed in his holy commands. As it is necessary that men should obey their great Creator and Lawgiver in order to secure his favor for ever, so it is no less necessary that they should have that holiness of heart, without which it is impossible to please and obey him.

3. It is absolutely necessary that men should be holy, in order to be proper objects of the approbation and complacence of a holy God. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "The prayer of the upright is his delight." "He taketh pleasure in them that fear him; in them that hope in his mercy." The holiness of the Deity naturally disposes him to take real complacence and delight in all his holy creatures and dutiful subjects. When they unite with him in affection, his heart unites with theirs, and he is pleased to say, "I love them that love

me." As holiness in men renders them beautiful and amiable in the eyes of him who is perfectly holy, so unholiness renders them infinitely odious in his sight. He is of purer eyes than to behold sin, and cannot look on iniquity. He is angry with the wicked every day. They are the objects of his most holy and perfect aversion. Though they may outwardly appear beautiful in the eyes of men, yet to the holy and omniscient eye of a holy God they must appear infinitely vile and odious. He that loves the greatest good of the universe, must hate those who oppose it. He that loves pure benevolence, must hate perfect selfishness. He that loves the holiness of his creatures, must hate those who hate their holiness. It therefore appears to be absolutely necessary that men should be holy, in order to become the objects of the divine complacence and delight. As it is infinitely important that men should secure the favor of God, which is life and better than life, so it is equally necessary and important that they should be holy as God is holy, and be united to him in the affections of their heart. I must add,

4. That it is absolutely necessary that men should be holy, in order to enjoy a holy God. Since God is holy in all his affections, designs and works, none can enjoy him without a holy conformity to his character and conduct. We can enjoy no object that is not pleasing to us. We must take pleasure in the being, perfections and government of God, in order to enjoy him. And all holy beings do love and enjoy God. David says, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." And again he says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." The enjoyment of God is the highest happiness that a pious and immortal soul can enjoy; and accordingly this is the greatest good that God has promised to bestow upon those who feel a filial spirit towards him. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God and he shall be my son." Paul tells christians, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Christians enjoy all things in the enjoyment of God. But in order to enjoy all things in God, men must be like him, or holy as he is holy. Hence says the apostle John: "Beloved, now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Since God is holy, all his purposes and operations are holy. His holiness does, in a manner, sanctify every creature, every

object and every event in the universe. So that without holiness no man can really enjoy any being or object, in this world or the next. For God has made all things for himself, and their value and importance consist in being means to promote his glory, which is his supreme and ultimate end in all his works. So that holiness, and nothing but holiness, can put any of the human race into the enjoyment of God and all good. Now if it be necessary that they should see and love and please and enjoy God, then it is absolutely necessary that they should be holy, because he is holy. It is far more important that men should be holy than that they should exist; and while they exist, it is far more important that they should be holy than that they should be happy, either in this life or the life to come.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God be perfectly holy, then the more sinners know of God, the more they will hate him. They are lovers of their own selves. They love their own private, personal interest and happiness, solely and supremely. All their selfish views, and feelings, and pursuits are in direct contrariety to all the holy and benevolent views and feelings of the Deity. There are no two things more directly opposite to each other, than holiness and selfishness. So far therefore as sinners, who are perfectly selfish, discover the holiness of God, just so far they hate his character, laws and government. They are justly called haters of God, and enemies of God. Christ says, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father." This, however, they are very unwilling to believe and acknowledge. They are apt to entertain a better opinion of themselves, and especially of their hearts. Though they will not presume to say that they have never neglected any thing which God has required, nor done any thing which he has forbidden, yet they are very ready to say that they have generally meant to do right. But it is owing to their ignorance, or inattention, that they imagine that their hearts are better than their external conduct. God, who knows their thoughts afar off, has told them, that "every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is only evil continually." They are selfish, and consequently as sinful and inimical to God as they can be, with their present views, desires and pursuits. It is true, indeed, that sometimes God is not in all their thoughts; and sometimes, when they think of him, they view him merely as a benefactor, and love him for his favors. But this is consistent with the total enmity of their hearts towards his true character, when clearly seen and realized. This was fully manifested by the conduct of sinners

towards Christ. While they viewed him as their long expected Messiah, and as their deliverer from their national calamities, they followed him in multitudes, and sung "Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But when they discovered his holy hatred of their selfish desires and hopes, they became his mortal enemies, and imbrued their hands in his blood; by which they gave visible and infallible evidence that they were irreconcilable enemies to the God of Israel, whom they professed to love. The same selfish spirit reigns in the hearts of all impenitent, unrenewed sinners. They hate God just as much as they love themselves. They hate his holiness just as much as they love their own selfishness. They hate God supremely, for the very reason for which they ought to love him supremely; and that is, for his holiness, and nothing else. When they view him as one altogether like themselves, they feel no enmity towards him; but when they view him as a holy, sin hating and sin condemning God, their hearts sensibly rise against him, and they cannot bear the thought that he should reign over them. They would, if it were in their power, wrest the sceptre from his hand, and defeat his designs, or destroy his existence. They feel as Pharaoh did, when he said, "I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice."

2. If God be perfectly holy, then sinners will hate one part of his character and conduct as really as another, when they become fully acquainted with it. They are very apt to think that they love some parts of his character and some parts of his conduct, while they perfectly hate some parts of his character and some parts of his conduct. They are willing that God should be eternal, self existent, omnipotent, omniscient and infinitely wise, if he would employ all these divine perfections in their favor. They have no objections against any of his natural attributes, if he would only be so kind as to exert them when and where and how they desire he would exert them. The carnal, selfish Israelites were highly pleased when God visibly displayed his almighty power and amiable sovereignty in the destruction of their enemies at the Red Sea, and in their protection and the miraculous supply of their wants during their journey through the wilderness. All sinners are willing that God should be the greatest, the wisest and most powerful being, if he would be on their side, and employ his great and glorious perfections to gratify their desires and promote their selfish purposes. They really love him sometimes and for some things, and imagine that they are really friendly to him. But when they come to see and realize that he is holy in all his character, and in all his ways, and in all his works, they hate one of his perfections

as really as another, and one part of his character as really as another. They hate his holy power, his holy wisdom, his holy knowledge, his holy love, his holy mercy, his holy grace, his holy purposes, and all the holy dispensations of his providence. When they realize that God has made all things for himself, and intends to dispose of all things to promote his own glory and the highest holy happiness of the universe, they hate his whole character and his whole conduct, without a single exception. When they discover the perfect and universal holiness of God, they can discern no form or comeliness in his character or conduct wherefore they should love him; but they hate every thing he has done, and every thing he has designed to do. There is not a single trait in his character, but what they perfectly hate. If sinners did but see and realize that one perfection of God is as holy as another, and one instance of his conduct is as holy as another, and that his whole character and conduct are perfectly benevolent and harmonious, they would no more doubt of their total enmity and opposition to God than of their own existence. The more clearly the whole character and the whole counsel of God are exhibited before them, the more the selfishness and sinfulness of their hearts will be awakened and realized. Paul once thought that he was blameless; but when the commandment came, sin revived and he died.

3. If God be perfectly holy, then every scheme of religion which is founded in selfishness is hateful to God and fatal to man. The gospel scheme of religion is founded in holiness, and all its essential doctrines are according to godliness; but every false scheme of religion is founded in selfishness, and all its essential doctrines are subversive of godliness. Arminianism is a false scheme of religion, and founded in selfishness. It teaches that all mankind come into the world entirely free from sin, and no more inclined to evil than to good. And though they afterwards become morally depraved, yet their depravity lies in their understanding, and not in the heart. It teaches that all men would love God supremely, if they only had a true speculative knowledge of his true character. They have no need of a renovation of heart, but only an enlightening of their understanding, to prepare them for heaven. They may love, obey and enjoy God without having the least disinterested benevolence, or holiness of heart. This selfish scheme of religion is subversive of all godliness, or vital piety. Antinomianism is a false scheme of religion, and founded in selfishness. It teaches that it is impossible for men to act from any other motive than self love; and that they are under no obligation to love God, unless they know that he loves them, and intends to make them for ever happy. This scheme of religion is entirely subversive

of holiness, and diametrically repugnant to the law of God and to the spirit of the gospel. Universalism is a false scheme of religion, and founded in selfishness. It teaches that men may live and die totally selfish, and yet inherit and enjoy the kingdom of heaven. This scheme of religion is totally subversive of holiness, and perfectly contrary to what nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand of mankind have always supposed to be either virtuous or pious. I might mention Sabellianism, Arianism, Socinianism and Unitarianism, which are all so many branches of selfishness, which are directly opposed to the pure spirit and holy doctrines of the gospel. It seems strange that any, with the Bible in their hands, should devise or embrace any selfish scheme of religion, and build their eternal hopes upon it. For if God be perfectly holy, it is morally impossible that he should be pleased with an unholy religion, or approve of those who embrace it. It is safe to say that any scheme of religion which is founded in selfishness must be hateful to a perfectly holy God, and totally disqualify men for the enjoyment of him both here and hereafter. It is immaterial by what name a selfish religion is called, or how generally it be circulated and approved; for it will certainly destroy its votaries unless they renounce it, and become holy as God is holy.

4. If God be perfectly holy, then he must disapprove and reject all the religious services of all the unholy, impenitent, and unrenewed. Though there be a great diversity in the outward appearance and conduct of sinners, yet they are all by nature totally selfish and sinful, and equally destitute of supreme love to God, or true holiness. There is no essential difference between the heart of one sinner, and the heart of another. As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of one sinner answereth to another. They all act from the same selfish motives, whether they plow or sow, or whether they read or pray; and this, he who looketh on the heart and not on the outward appearance, sees and condemns. This he tells them plainly. He says, that the plowing of the wicked is sin, and the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. Our Saviour said a great deal in his private and public discourses, to convince the best as well as the worst of sinners of the depravity of their hearts, which contaminated all their external services, however apparently regular, amiable and sincere. He knew how generally sinners trusted in themselves that they were righteous and acceptable in the sight of God, on account of their exterior conformity to the divine commands, while they retained and cherished every selfish and sinful affection. His sermon on the mount, which delineated the nature and effects of pure, disinterested benevolence, was directly suited to expose

and condemn all the selfish feelings, desires, and pursuits of the most serious, devout, self-righteous sinners. But his private discourses were often much more pointed. He stripped the amiable young man of all his boasted goodness and confident hopes, and sent him away sorrowful. He expressly said to some of the best of sinners, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." Yea, he called them serpents, and a generation of vipers, and asked them how they could escape the damnation of hell. Human nature is still the same, and the character and conduct and condition of the most amiable sinners is still the same, in the sight of a holy God. The apostle, therefore, asks those who had too favorable an opinion of unbelievers, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" He then addresses himself to such as had a disposition to overlook the total selfishness and depravity of sinners, and says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and I will receive you and be a father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." This representation is perfectly agreeable to Christ's declaration to his disciples: "I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Paul says that while he was a Pharisee, he was in his own opinion, in respect to the righteousness of the law, blameless. There are multitudes at this day, who entertain the same views and hopes that Paul did, who are under the reigning power of a totally selfish and depraved heart. Such a heart renders their religious performances altogether vile and odious in the view of a holy God, who will condemn and destroy them, unless they make them a new heart and a new spirit, and turn from selfishness to holiness.

5. If God be perfectly holy, then sinners have no reason to desire preachers to lower down the terms of salvation which he has proposed in the gospel. The terms which he has proposed require holiness of heart. The love he requires is holy love, the repentance he requires is holy repentance, the faith he requires is holy faith, the submission he requires is holy submission, and the obedience he requires is holy obedience. And he allows no substitute for holiness. Paul, who once thought that he could obey and please God without holy love, was thoroughly convinced of his fatal error and guilt, and has stated it in the strongest terms. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the

gift of prophecy, and understanding all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." By charity here the apostle means pure holiness, or pure disinterested benevolence, which seeketh not its own. Without this, he says, men can do nothing pleasing to God, or that will secure the salvation of their souls. But they all desire to be excused from exercising such holiness of heart, and to substitute some external services in the room of it. And some preachers are willing to gratify them, and lower down the essential conditions of the gospel. They tell them that if they will only pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, they may safely omit the weightier matters of the law, justice, judgment and the love of God. But though this mode of preaching may please men for a while, yet it directly tends to destroy them for ever. For God is a holy God; and without holiness no man can please him, nor be admitted into his holy kingdom, nor enjoy the blessedness of it. The deceiver and the deceived must become holy, or eternally perish.

6. If God be perfectly holy, then all sinners may see in what consists their inability to embrace the gospel. They often lament their impotence to comply with the terms of salvation, and consider it as a great calamity. But if they would only look into their own hearts, they would see that their impotence lies within themselves, and arises solely from the selfish and sinful exercises of their own hearts; and that the terms of salvation are as low and easy as God could make them. He requires nothing but what they must have, in order to be happy in this world and in the world to come. It is morally impossible to save them without that holiness which consists in the free and voluntary exercise of holy love, which is impartial, universal and disinterested benevolence.

7. It appears from what has been said, that there can be no neuters in religion. Every person must either love holiness or hate it; and either love God, or hate him for his holiness; and either desire to go to heaven, or refuse to go. Life and death are set before all; and they are commanded to choose life, and condemned if they choose death. Sinners are in a critical and dangerous situation. They are in the hand of a holy God, who has a power and right to save, or destroy; and none can take them out of his hand. Be not deceived; for God will not be mocked with any thing in the place of a holy heart. To all sinners he says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

SERMON XXIX.

SINNERS VAINLY ATTEMPT TO DISSOLVE THEIR OBLIGATIONS.

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.—Psalm ii. 3.

This psalm contains a prediction of Christ's coming to set up his spiritual kingdom in this world; and of the opposition that should be made to his holy and gracious design by all characters and classes of men. "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." By the Lord's anointed, David here means Christ, which name properly signifies anointed. Accordingly, he again calls him anointed in the forty-fifth psalm. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; therefore God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." The Father, Son and Holy Ghost were equally united and concerned in setting up the kingdom of Christ upon the earth. And therefore all the opposition of Jews and Gentiles, of rulers and subjects, of high and low, was pointed against the one God in three persons. The reason why sinners of all descriptions were united in opposing this holy spiritual kingdom, was, because it came clothed with divine power and authority, which laid them under infinite bonds to return to God from whom they had revolted, and to become reconciled to those bonds for ever. The idea of being bound they could

not endure; and unitedly engaged to free themselves, if possible, from their obligations to God. They said in words and actions, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." This is equally the spirit and language of sinners at the present day. They wish to break loose from God, and throw off every divine restraint. The plain import of the text may be expressed in this general observation,

That sinners endeavor to free themselves from all obligations to God. I shall show,

I. What obligations they are under to God;

II. That they endeavor to free themselves from such obligations; and,

III. That their endeavors will be in vain.

I. I am to show what obligations sinners are under to God. These are of various kinds.

1. They are under natural obligations to God. Their nature as dependent creatures, forms an intimate connection between them and their Maker. Their dependence is constant and absolute. They cannot exist a moment without the immediate exertion of divine power. When God brought them into being, he gave them no power to preserve themselves in existence. They are no less dependent on God for preservation than they were for creation. This is true of all created beings. They have no self supporting, or self preserving power. In God they live, and move, and have their being. There is precisely the same connection between God and all his creatures, as there is between cause and effect; and it is well known that an effect can exist no longer than the cause which produced it continues to operate. My hand supports my book, which would instantly fall if I should withdraw my hand. The hand of God supports my existence; and if he should withdraw his hand I should no longer exist. This is true of all the children of men. They are continually in the hand of God, and must be so as long as they exist. Their dependence is absolute and universal. It respects all their natural powers and faculties, whether corporeal or mental. They are not sufficient to think, or speak, or act of themselves, independently of the presence and efficiency of God. They are as near to God, and as dependent on him, as omnipotence can make them. This natural dependence is a natural bond, cord, or obligation, by which God binds them to himself as closely and strongly as possible. And there is no idea more familiar to their minds than this of dependence. It springs up in their minds in infancy, increases in childhood and youth, and becomes stronger and more familiar through every stage of life. As soon as any one realizes that he is a creature of God, he cannot help believing that he

is under a natural obligation to him, by reason of his entire dependence on him for life and breath and all things.

2. Sinners are under a moral, as well as a natural obligation to God. He is a being possessed of every natural and moral excellence. His heart is full of love and good will to all his creatures of every character, condition or capacity; and all his natural perfections are under the influence of his perfect and universal goodness. He has never said, nor designed, nor done any thing but what his perfect goodness dictated. And he never will do any thing contrary to the perfect benevolence of his heart. He never will feel nor express any justice but benevolent justice, nor any mercy but benevolent mercy, nor treat any creature in any other manner than a benevolent manner. His moral perfections are equal to his natural. He is as infinitely holy, just and good, as he is infinitely wise, knowing and powerful. And all these moral perfections he is every where displaying, before the eyes of all mankind, in all the works of creation and providence, which lay them under moral obligations to love, adore and obey him. So the apostle declares in the first of Romans. Speaking of the heathen themselves, who were destitute of divine revelation, he says, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." The moral perfections of God are supremely amiable, and bind all mankind to love him supremely. The supreme moral excellence of God lays every intelligent creature, who is capable of seeing it, under moral obligation to glorify him as God. As every sinner is capable of knowing that God is perfectly good, so he is under moral obligation to love him for his goodness. And as he is capable of seeing that all the favors he enjoys come from his kindness and beneficence, so he is under moral obligation to thank him for every blessing which he receives from his hand. The whole earth is full of the goodness of God; and all men feel the happy influence of it, which binds them to feel and express supreme love to his character, and cordial obedience to every intimation of his will.

3. Sinners are under legal, as well as natural and moral obligation to God. His absolute supremacy gives him an independent right to assume the character of lawgiver. It properly belongs to him to give law to all his intelligent creatures. This right he has exercised towards mankind. He has expressly required them to love him with all the heart, with all the soul,

with all the mind, and with all the strength. This is the fundamental law of his kingdom, and virtually comprises all the precepts, prohibitions and threatenings contained in his word. This is a *legal* obligation, which God has laid upon sinners In addition to the obligation arising from his moral character, prior to law. His moral character binds those to whom he has never given law, by a mere *moral* obligation; but his revealed will binds all those to whom it is made known, by a *legal* obligation. Hence the apostle says, "Whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." No law can bind those to whom it is not given and made known. But every law binds those to whom it is given and made known, in exact proportion to the authority of the lawgiver; for all legal obligation arises solely from the authority of the lawgiver. The law of God binds men in exact proportion to his authority over them; and since his authority over them is absolute and unlimited, his law binds all to whom it is given, with an infinite obligation to obedience. As his law is contained in his word, so it is sent to all to whom his word is sent; and infinitely binds all who become acquainted with it. Thus all sinners in this land of gospel light, are under natural, moral and legal obligations to God. These natural, moral and legal bonds, like a threefold cord, bind them to be and do whatever God has required. And these obligations lie upon them in their full force, whether they are willing or unwilling to be bound by them. All divine laws bind the conscience, let the heart be what it will. And since sinners have consciences as well as saints, notwithstanding the total corruption of their hearts, so they are under every kind of obligation to love and obey God that saints are. I proceed to show,

II. That sinners endeavor to free themselves from all the obligations which they are under to God. They wish and endeavor to break his bands, and cast away his cords from them.

I. This appears by their mode of speaking upon this subject. The inspired writers tell us what they say about their obligations to God. "They say unto him, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" The same inspired writer, describing the wicked man and his feelings towards God, says, "He would fain flee out of his hand." David represents the inward language of the sinner as expressing the same feelings. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." When Moses called upon Pharaoh in the name of God to let his people go, he obstinately said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

Christ, in the parable of the talents, represents sinners as saying in regard to God, We will not have him to reign over us. Whenever sinners speak out their feelings towards God, their language implies that they wish there were no God, that they desire to banish him from their thoughts, and that they endeavor to get out of his hands and free themselves from all obligations to him.

2. They manifest the same carnal mind which is enmity against God, by their mode of reasoning, as well as speaking upon this subject. They endeavor to reason away all their obligations to God. Sometimes they argue against their natural obligation to him. They say that, since God has brought them into being, and given them their rational powers and faculties, they are able to love or hate, choose or refuse, to act, or not to act, independently of his aid, direction, or control. They insist upon it that as moral agents, they have a self determining power over all their thoughts, affections, words and actions. They imagine they can demonstrate that they have an independent existence, and an independent power to originate all their own volitions, and govern all their own conduct, without the least interposition of divine power, or superintendency. They boldly speak this independent language, when they say, "With our tongues will we prevail; our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" If they are told that this mode of reasoning against their natural obligation to God is so absurd that they cannot believe it themselves, they will generally grant that it is so; but they will immediately and confidently plead, that if they are absolutely dependent on God, then they are under no *moral* nor *legal* obligation to him. They say, if they live, and move, and have their being in God; if they are in his hand, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, then they are mere machines, have no moral freedom, and are under no moral, or legal obligation to God. They say their entire dependence destroys both their activity and accountability; and God has no right to blame them for being what he has made them, nor for doing what he has caused them to do. Thus sinners argued near two thousand years ago, when Paul told them, God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. They were then ready to ask, "Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" And how often do we now hear the same mode of reasoning against all obligations to love and obey God? Let the duty of repentance or faith be urged upon a sinner, and how promptly and confidently will he reply, I cannot repent, nor believe with my present heart; and I cannot make a new heart; this is the work of God; and until he performs this work for me, I cannot be bound to love

him, nor blamed for not loving him. I am a sinner, and as such I am under no obligation to become a saint, a believer, or friend to Christ. If we should now ask this person — Are you serious — are you in sober earnest in reasoning thus against your obligations to your Maker? he would seriously answer, I am in earnest, and I verily believe what I say is reasonable and unanswerable. We do not pretend to answer this mode of reasoning at present, but only ask whether this is not the common mode of reasoning among sinners? and does it not clearly prove that they desire and endeavor to disannul and dissolve all their moral and legal obligations to God? Besides,

3. It appears from their mode of acting, as well as from their mode of reasoning and speaking upon this subject, that they desire and endeavor to free themselves from all obligations to become reconciled and obedient to God. They have actually exerted themselves to break his bonds and cast away his cords from them. When God sent a written message to Jehoiakim, king of Israel, did he not, after Jehudi had read three or four leaves, take it and cut it with his pen-knife and cast it into the fire, until all the roll was consumed? And did he not do this to get loose from his obligations to God? Since then, have not the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers taken counsel together to burn the Bible? We have certainly had accounts of such conduct, not only several hundred years ago among Pagans, but of late years among a nation that has been both civilized and Christianized. And what greater effort could have been made to throw off all allegiance and subjection to the God of heaven? Nor is there reason to doubt whether the same spirit still remains in this land. This spirit our Saviour represents as reigning in the hearts of sinners under the light of divine truth. Hear his parable in the twelfth of Mark. "A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine-fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant: and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some and killing some. Having yet one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they

took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall, therefore, the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen and will give the vineyard unto others." This is a striking representation of the feelings and conduct of sinners in respect to their obligations to God, the owner and proprietor of the universe. They have always been unwilling to acknowledge their obligations to him, and have endeavored to free themselves from them, and become independent. If they could only do this, they vainly imagine the world would be their own. And it is still the desire and endeavor of all sinners to possess and govern the world, and to break every cord by which they are bound to God, and to make him their almighty servant. But,

III. All their desires and endeavors to get loose from their obligations to God will be in vain. And he has plainly told them so. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Could their vain and presumptuous desires and designs be set in a more contemptuous and humiliating light? Solomon says, "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." And again he says, "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." And God himself challenged those sinners who attempted to defeat his design and predictions, to do it if they could. "All the remnant of Judah shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs." God always has fulfilled his purposes, and always will, notwithstanding all the vain attempts of his enemies to defeat them. He set his king on his holy hill of Zion, notwithstanding all the efforts of Jews and Gentiles to prevent it. Who ever hardened themselves against God and prospered? Pharaoh did not. Ahab did not. Saul did not. And the crucifiers of Christ did not. Paul was constrained to bow to him whose name he had blasphemed. But still, sinners hope to succeed in breaking the bands which bind them to reconciliation and obedience to God. They must, however, be convinced of their folly and guilt, if they would seriously consider,

1. That they cannot destroy the existence of God. He exists in and of himself, independently of all other beings in the universe. He is infinitely above the reach of sinners. They cannot do any thing that has the least tendency to destroy

the existence of him who made them. Can the thing formed destroy him who formed it? Can all the enemies of God united, put forth a single effort to destroy him, if he only withdraws his supporting influence from them? But if they cannot destroy his existence, they can by no means dissolve their obligations to him. For as long as he exists, he will be their God, infinitely glorious and amiable, and worthy of all their love, obedience and homage. Their obligations to him are all founded in his being and perfections, and therefore must exist and remain in their full force as long as he exists and remains what he is. They will be dependent on him as long as he exists; they will be under moral obligation to love him supremely as long as he exists; and his holy and righteous law will bind them to obedience as long as he exists. They cannot break his bands, nor cast away his cords, any more than they can destroy his existence. It is then utterly in vain for them to desire, or endeavor to dissolve their natural, moral and legal obligations to their Maker. And now,

2. Let them consider that they cannot destroy their own existence. As they cannot destroy the existence of God, so they cannot destroy the existence of themselves, because he who gave them their existence at first can continue it for ever, and he has assured them in his word that he will do it. They may, indeed, dissolve the union between their souls and bodies, and put a period to their natural lives, but they cannot destroy their rational and immortal spirits. These are destined to exist after their bodies have decayed and crumbled to the dust from which they were taken. As they had no power to come into existence, so they have no power to go out of it. But if they cannot destroy their own existence, then they cannot destroy their obligations to God. For as long as they exist, their relation to him and his relation to them will exist, and this mutual relation will for ever support and enforce their obligations to him. So long as they exist they will be his creatures, and, as such, dependent on him, and under moral obligation to love his character, obey his law, and submit to his government. There is no more possibility of their destroying their obligations to God, than there is of their destroying both their own and the divine existence. The more they consider the grounds of their obligations to God, the more they must be convinced of the vanity and presumption, as well as guilt, of designing and attempting to break the bands and cast away the cords by which they are bound to love and glorify God, as God, and as their God, whose they are, and in whom they live, and move, and have their being. Let them read and ponder what God says to them upon this most solemn and interesting subject. "See

now that I, even I, am he; and there is no God with me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If sinners endeavor to free themselves from all their obligations to God, then we may see what is the great subject of controversy between them and their Creator. Ever since the first apostacy, there has been a serious and interesting controversy between God and his rebellious creatures here on earth. Though they began the controversy, yet he is willing to hear the ground of their disaffection and opposition, and to settle the dispute between them upon just and reasonable terms. This he declares in a loud and solemn manner. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy; and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants. O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted; and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." God knew that sinners would not dare to state the ground of their controversy with him; and therefore he states it for them, and appeals to all the world to decide on which side the blame lay, whether his or theirs. The point of controversy which he here states is this, whether he had injured them, or they had injured him; or whether he should bind them, or they should bind him. God claims the right to bind sinners; but they deny his right to bind them, in all cases whatsoever, and complain of his bands and cords as hard and unreasonable. So sinners in Babylon complained. They said, "The way of the Lord is not equal." The slothful servant made the same complaint. "He which had received the one talent, came, and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strewed." And sinners still keep up the same controversy with God. Their selfish hearts cannot bear the thought that he should reign over them, and bind them by infinite authority to love him supremely. They complain of the strictness, extent and spirituality of his first and great commandment, which requires them to love him with all the heart, with all the mind, and

with all the strength of their natural powers and faculties, upon pain of eternal death, when he knows that it is morally impossible that they should love him supremely without better hearts than they now have; and they say they can get no better. This leads them to murmur and complain of the hard and heavy bands by which God binds them to love, obedience and submission. They say they cannot and will not submit to the government of a being, who treats them so unjustly and cruelly. But God says they shall submit or die. Here the point of controversy is, who shall govern, whether God or they; or who shall submit, whether God or they. This is a most serious and interesting controversy. But there is no difficulty in seeing that God is on the right side of this question, and sinners are on the wrong. There is no ground to doubt whether God ought to govern, and sinners ought to submit. His laws, his bands and his cords are just such as they ought to be, and just such as sinners ought to submit to, cordially and cheerfully. This God knows to be true, and sinners will know it to be true, whether their criminal controversy finally terminates in their conversion or destruction.

2. Though sinners are naturally disposed to free themselves from their obligations to God, yet they are not always sensible of it. They commonly think that they have no such disposition to complain of the bands and cords by which they are bound to God, and to desire and endeavor to break and cast them away. And though they are told this is their disposition, they will seriously say that they were never conscious of it, and they cannot believe it is true; and therefore complain of the preacher who represents them as having it in their hearts to contend with their Maker. There is good reason to believe that many sinners, at many times, can truly make such declarations. For many sinners habitually live in great stupidity. God is not in all their thoughts. Or if they think of him, they think of him as a being that has nothing to do with them, and that they have nothing to do with him. Though they are actually under natural, moral and legal obligations to God, yet they do not feel that they are bound by these bands and cords, but imagine they are as free as if there were no God. They do, in their own apprehension, live without God in the world. Or if they believe in speculation there is a God, still they are willing that such a great, and wise, and powerful, and benevolent being should exist, so long as they imagine he intends to do them nothing but good as long as they live. But let them only awake out of their stupidity, and realize that God is displeased with them for their vanity, stupidity, impenitence and unbelief, and is disposed to punish them for ever; and they will soon

find within them a carnal heart, which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law nor government, nor indeed can be. They will then realize the bands and cords which bind them to God, and which they will desire and endeavor, with all their might, to break and cast from them. They will then regret and complain that God has given them a dependent existence, a conscience which reproves and condemns them, a heart which is corrupt and depraved, a soul that is immortal, and which he may save or destroy. Then all the love they ever had to God will turn into hatred, all the peace they ever had will turn into pain, and all the hope they ever had will turn into despair. It will then appear a fearful thing to be in the hands of God as the clay is in the hands of the potter; and there is none to deliver. This is no visionary representation. It may be realized by sinners who are now at ease in Zion, and saying in their hearts, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.

3. If sinners endeavor to free themselves from all their obligations to God, then we see why they are the most opposed to the most essential and important doctrines of the gospel. They can very patiently hear many doctrines and duties of Christianity taught and inculcated; but the principal and cardinal doctrines and duties of the gospel are very disagreeable to their hearts. They often feel, and sometimes manifest, a sensible opposition to the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of election, and especially the doctrine of reprobation. The reason is plain and obvious, why these doctrines in particular are so displeasing to them. The reason is, these doctrines bring into view the bands and cords by which they are bound to God, and cannot get out of his hands. If they are totally depraved, then they are bound by the cords of their iniquities. If they must be regenerated, then they are dependent on sovereign grace. If election and reprobation be true, then God made the bands and cords by which they are bound, from all eternity. If all these doctrines be true, then they cannot themselves break the cords by which they are bound, nor can any created being break them; but they must be holden as long as God and they exist. And to be absolutely bound to a being whom they perfectly hate, without a possibility of breaking their bands, must be extremely distressing. It is not strange therefore, that they oppose the peculiar and essential doctrines of the gospel, which is a glass in which they cannot help seeing themselves in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. Let a preacher only tell them that these doctrines are not true, and they feel at liberty and peace; and no other doctrines will disturb them. For the truth of this, I appeal to observation and experience. Do

we see or hear that any people complain of preaching which does not bring these doctrines into view; or do they ever appear to be in anxiety and distress about the concerns of their souls, or their spiritual and eternal state? Do they not rather ascribe all such anxiety and distress to the workings of a deluded imagination? But what says experience in this case? I mean the experience of those who are inwardly displeased with these peculiar, pinching doctrines. Do they not feel a load thrown off, and their minds set at loose and ease, when they hear these doctrines denied, discarded and reprobated? This is proof sufficient that the reason why they are so disagreeable to the hearts of many, is, that they discover and fasten the bands and cords which bind them to God.

4. If sinners endeavor to free themselves from their obligations to God, then they always endeavor to stifle convictions. Some unhappy occurrence, or some sudden bereavement, or some affecting discourse about the joys of heaven and the miseries of the damned, may awaken and alarm sinners without producing any genuine convictions. But a sense of danger is very different from a sense of guilt, or desert of punishment, in which real conviction of sin consists. Sinners are never convinced that they deserve God's wrath and curse both in this life and in that which is to come, until they not only feel their obligations to God, but the propriety and justice of the bands and cords by which he has bound them to himself. When they realize that he had a right to make them dependent, to lay them under moral obligation, and to bind them by the infinite authority of his law to love him supremely, upon pain of endless destruction; then they feel their guilt for violating such sacred obligations to their Creator and Lawgiver, and are convinced that they deserve to die, for their disaffection and rebellion against such a great and glorious being as God now appears to be. But while they are merely awakened and alarmed by the apprehension of danger, they have no such convictions of sin and guilt, and therefore rather pity than condemn themselves. And they often take comfort under their awakenings, and try to cherish and continue them, with a hope that they will do them good, and finally prove the means of their conversion and salvation. Though they are painful to endure, yet they have such strong and ardent desires to be saved and to escape eternal destruction, that they would be willing to endure them as long as they live, if this might only be the consequence. Accordingly, instead of stifling, they mean to cherish their awakenings, and often say that they are afraid they shall lose their sense of danger and become stupid. But they do not feel so reconciled to convictions. These they dread and endeavor to stifle. For

these are the bands and cords that bind them, which they desire and endeavor, with all their might, to break and cast from them. Convictions weaken their strength and hopes, and fasten their cords, and throw them into the sovereign hands of God, from which they feel they cannot escape. They could bear their infirmities or fears, but a wounded spirit they cannot bear. While they feel themselves at liberty to murmur and complain, and to pity themselves as hardly dealt with, they find self support. But when they feel self condemned, as well as legally condemned, and that the same bands and cords which bind them to duty, equally bind them to future and eternal punishment, they realize that there is no alternative but cordially to approve their just condemnation, or lie under the weight of it for ever. But under such clear convictions of guilt, their carnal mind, which is enmity against God, will not suffer them to submit. They had rather die than do it. Then is the time, if ever, for God to change their hearts and save their souls, or still reserve them to the judgment and condemnation of the last day.

5. If sinners are under such natural, moral and legal obligations to God as have been mentioned, then he can awaken and convince them at any time he pleases. Though they feel at ease and liberty, and imagine they can walk in the ways of their heart and in the sight of their eyes as long as they please, without any restraint, yet they are actually bound by bands and cords that they cannot break. And it is only for him to open their eyes to see, and their consciences to feel, the bands and cords by which they are bound, in order to throw them into the deepest anxiety and distress. And this he can do when they are sick, or when they are well; when they are in adversity, or in prosperity; when they are in the house of God, or when they are absent; when they are busy, or when they are idle. They are never out of his sight, nor out of his reach. He always has access to their minds, and can direct the arrows of conviction to their consciences, at any time and in any place he pleases. Though they put far away the evil day, and resolve to shut their eyes and their ears against divine truth, and harden their hearts and consciences against all means of conviction, yet God can open their eyes and ears, and break their resolutions, and fill their hearts and consciences with guilt and remorse. He can do this, though they have made a covenant with death, and with hell are at agreement. He can separate their hearts and hands, however linked together, and take one and leave another. This he has done, and is continually doing. He can break their bands and fasten his own, which they cannot break. They have no ground to rejoice and exult in their

power to resist convictions and maintain their peace and security; for they have no such power, only when God lets them alone. And they know not how long he will let them alone. It seems to be high time for him to rise in his awful majesty, and make them see and feel that they are in his hand as the clay is in the hand of the potter, and that he can crush them as a potter's vessel.

6. Since sinners endeavor to free themselves from all their obligations to God, we may see why they are so extremely averse from prayer. There is no duty they are so unwilling to perform. They are unwilling to be exhorted to this duty, and much more unwilling to perform it. The reason is, they cannot pray without acknowledging their obligations to God, which they hate and wish to break. The child feels this, and neglects to pray. The youth feels this, and neglects to pray. Those that are pursuing vanities feel this, and neglect to pray. The sober moral sinner feels this, and neglects to pray. All sinners wish to forget or break their obligations to God; and cannot bear to strengthen them by going to him in secret and acknowledging them. Let any sinner who has cast off fear and restrained prayer go to God in prayer this evening, and he will feel that he has bound himself to pray to-morrow and from day to day, as long as he lives. But he hates his obligations to God, and will not begin to pray. Or if he does begin, he will neglect it as soon as his sense of his obligations to God is gone. This is true of every careless, stupid or merely awakened sinner. But the sinner under genuine convictions has different feelings in respect to prayer. He is afraid to pray, because he feels he cannot sincerely acknowledge the justice of these bands and cords which he wishes with all his heart to break, and intends to break, if possible, as long as he exists. Many a convinced sinner has thus become speechless, and found he could say nothing like prayer, which was consistent with his total enmity to God. Parents have no reason to wonder that they cannot persuade their children to pray; and ministers have no reason to wonder that they cannot persuade sinners to begin to pray; or after they have lost their awakenings and convictions, they cannot persuade them to begin to pray again. When any person prays, he acknowledges his obligations to God, and pledges himself to do his whole duty. This the sinner is not willing to do, and therefore neglects to pray. This the person who has lost his convictions is not willing to do, and therefore neglects to pray. And this the false or declining professor is not willing to do. It is the fear of men's acknowledging and confirming their obligations to God, that prevents their beginning to pray, and disposes them to neglect it after they have

once begun. Every prayerless person in this house knows whether this be true or not, and whether he is one who desires and endeavors to break all the bands and cords by which he is bound to God. Every sinner either neglects to pray, or prays amiss, to his own self condemnation and confusion. In what a wretched and guilty condition are all sinners!

7. If all sinners are under natural, moral and legal obligations to God, then they are all, without exception, bound to be religious, or to fulfil their obligations to their Maker, who has made them rational, immortal and accountable creatures. These divine obligations lie with all their weight upon children, upon youth, upon all men, whether rich or poor, high or low, learned or unlearned. No age, no condition, no secular concerns, can dissolve their obligations. But how many sinners practically deny their obligation to be religious, and expect that they shall generally be allowed this privilege without any censure or disapprobation from any but a few bigoted religionists, or over-orthodox preachers! How many would be ashamed to be found reading the Bible seriously, or calling upon God devoutly, or attending public worship statedly! Do not such by their speaking, reasoning and acting, plainly show that they endeavor to break every religious obligation, and desire to live without God in the world? Has God then misrepresented their character and conduct in his word? If not, they are his perfect enemies, and deserve to be treated as his enemies for ever. This he will sooner or later make them see and feel.

Finally: If sinners are bound to God by bands and cords which they cannot break nor cast away, then it is their immediate and imperious duty to cease from contending with their Maker; and to become cordially reconciled to the bands and cords by which he has bound them to himself. David did this. He said to God sincerely, "O how love I thy law!" Paul felt and expressed the same spirit. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." If you become reconciled to your obligations to God, they will prove a source of perpetual blessedness. But if you persist in hating and opposing them, they will prove a source of self condemnation and misery for ever. I now ask what you intend to do? And God may treat you according to your present resolution. But are you willing he should?

If you refuse to submit to God, and to the bands and cords by which you are bound to him, as surely as you live and as God lives, he will be bound by his own goodness to punish you forever and ever. "And what wilt thou say, when he shall punish thee?"

SERMON XXX.

TENDENCY OF THE GOSPEL TO ENLARGE THE HEART.

Our heart is enlarged. — 2 Corinthians, vi. 11

The apostle preached the gospel with great success in Corinth, where he formed a large number of converts into a Christian church, to whom he preached a year and six months. His long residence with them laid a foundation for his very strong attachment to them. But soon after he left them, they were led into errors, animosities, and contentions, by false and corrupt teachers. When he heard of their unhappy situation, he wrote his first epistle to them to correct their errors, and reunite them in their former peace and harmony. Though this letter produced some good effects, yet new difficulties arose, which gave occasion to his writing to them again. This second epistle breathes a very tender and affectionate spirit. In the two preceding chapters, and in the beginning of this, he speaks largely of his own views, and feelings, and sufferings, in promoting the cause of Christ, and the interests of his friends. And when he had wrought his own mind up to a high pitch of tenderness, he breaks forth in this pathetic language: "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is opened unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense of the same, I speak as unto my children, Be ye also enlarged." The gospel had enlarged the heart of the apostle, and he supposed it had a tendency to enlarge the hearts of the Corinthians who had embraced it. His views and feelings were once confined to himself, and to those persons and objects which were the most nearly connected with his private, personal interests. But after he had heard and understood and loved the gospel, his heart

expanded, and he felt interested in every thing comprised in the great and benevolent scheme of man's redemption. And from this we may conclude,

That the gospel has a tendency to enlarge the hearts of all who embrace it. I shall,

I. Consider what we are to understand by the heart's being enlarged; and,

II. Show that the gospel directly tends to enlarge the hearts of those who embrace it.

I. Let us consider what we are to understand by the heart's being enlarged.

The heart is something different from all the natural powers or faculties of the mind, and consists in free voluntary exercises, emotions, or affections; and its magnitude is always in proportion to the ultimate and supreme objects upon which it terminates. Every moral agent has some ultimate and supreme object in view, which is comparatively small or great; and this object, be it what it may, measures the magnitude of the heart. Self is the ultimate and supreme object of affection in every unsanctified heart. Every person in the state of nature desires and seeks his own separate, personal interest or happiness, above all other objects; but every one whose heart is renewed and sanctified, has a superior regard to the interest or happiness of any other person or being whose interest or happiness appears of more importance than his own. But whether the heart be selfish or benevolent, it is either large or small, in exact proportion to the largeness or smallness of the objects upon which it terminates. The heart of every one extends just as far as his apparent interest extends, and increases in magnitude just as the knowledge of his interest increases, whether his interest be selfish or benevolent. The heart of a child increases as his knowledge increases. The heart of a youth increases as his knowledge increases. The heart of a man increases as his knowledge increases. There is nothing perceived by the understanding, but what affects the heart more or less. Men's hearts increase and enlarge as their capacities, their relations, their connections and spheres of action increase and multiply. Though there is undoubtedly a real difference in the natural capacities of mankind, yet they all admit of perpetual cultivation and enlargement. It is recorded of Christ that he increased in wisdom and stature, as well as in favor with God and man. In childhood, the capacity is comparatively small; and the heart bears a near proportion to the capacity. This the apostle testifies of himself. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." And he might have added that he felt as a child. His heart was no

larger than his capacity. It is equally true of every person, through the whole course of his life, that his heart is bounded by his capacity. But as every person, from childhood to manhood, derives advantage from education, observation and experience, so his capacity, and consequently his heart must gradually enlarge. And after men come upon the stage of life, their relations, connections, and spheres of action increase and multiply, and of course their minds and hearts expand. More numerous and more important objects gain their attention and interest their feelings. When David was a shepherd, his mind and his heart were as small as his flock. When he became a general, his mind and his heart were as large as his army. And when he ascended the throne of Israel, his mind and his heart were enlarged in proportion to the number of his subjects, the extent of his kingdom, and the important interests of the nation. And it is expressly said of Solomon, that the largeness of his heart was equal to the capacity and strength of his mind. "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore." These were uncommon instances of the progress of the human mind and human heart; yet they are just and beautiful illustrations of the gradual growth of the understanding and heart of every person in the world.

The understanding of all men enlarges from stage to stage in life, and their hearts enlarge with the growth of their intellectual powers. It is true, indeed, the heart does not always keep pace with the progress of the capacity and knowledge. The reason is, some men do not interest themselves so much in what they know as others do, and consequently their hearts do not enlarge with equal rapidity. Every man regards and pursues some supreme object; and if his supreme object be low, mean, or unimportant, it will contract his mind and feelings in respect to all other objects, which are only subservient to that which is supreme. The man who makes property his supreme object, sees nothing in the universe superior to property, and esteems nothing important but what tends to promote property. The man who makes amusements his supreme object, sees nothing superior to amusements, and values every thing according to its tendency to promote and secure the frivolous objects of his wishes. Let such men have as much information as they will, their hearts must be small, in comparison with what they would have been if they had placed their supreme attention and affection upon greater and nobler objects, whether of a temporal, or spiritual nature. In a word, it may be laid down as a maxim, that every man's heart is in proportion to what he esteems his highest interest. This every

man knows to be so by his own experience. No man values himself more than his highest interest. And no man values another any more than he supposes his highest interest to be. Hence the hearts of men increase and enlarge as fast as their capacities and knowledge increase, and no faster. Solomon says, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase." Every person wishes to increase his highest interest, whether he places his interest in temporal, or spiritual good. And the more his mind expands, the more important his highest interest will appear, and the more his heart will be enlarged, whether it be holy or unholy. As a man's heart is always where his treasure is, so his heart is as large and no larger than his supposed treasure. It is as easy to conceive of the largeness of a man's heart, as to conceive of the largeness of his interest. I now proceed to show,

II. That the gospel has a direct tendency to enlarge the hearts of those who embrace it. The gospel comprises the highest good of the universe; or, it is that wise and benevolent scheme which God concerted from eternity to promote the highest happiness and holiness of the intellectual system; and those who embrace the gospel, cordially approve of this great and good design. Their hearts unite with the heart of God, and they feel as he feels towards himself and all his rational creatures. They love the good that he loves, and desire to have it promoted in the very way that he has proposed in the gospel to promote it. The apostle says that God created all things according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus; and that he will, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. It is the great and glorious design of the gospel to bring all good beings to the most perfect union and happiness, or to put them into the everlasting possession of all good, through the medium of Christ. As soon, therefore, as any of the human race become cordially united to Christ, they embrace the gospel and become interested in all the blessings contained in it. The discovery and choice of this great good immediately expands their hearts. This our Saviour represents as the immediate effect of embracing the gospel. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Those who embrace the gospel, immediately discover and

secure that kingdom of God, which is the sum and comprehension of all good. Accordingly they are represented as being heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ to the same common and comprehensive interest of the universe. This is the language of Paul to the christians in Corinth. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Now the gospel, which thus enlarges the interests of those who embrace it, must have a direct and perpetual tendency to enlarge their hearts. For their hearts necessarily expand in proportion to their knowledge of their great and ever growing interests. Here it seems proper to enter into particulars, and point out the various respects in which the gospel never fails to enlarge the hearts of those who embrace it. And,

1. It tends to enlarge their hearts towards God. It is the gospel, which gives the fullest and brightest display of his glory. It unfolds his designs, records his conduct, expresses his feelings, and makes the most perfect discovery of all his great and amiable perfections. It represents him as creating, upholding and governing all things, and filling the whole universe with his presence and goodness. So far as any of mankind, therefore, understand and love the gospel, just so far their hearts are enlarged towards God, the greatest and best of beings. They feel interested in his existence, in his perfections and in his blessedness; yea, all their interests centre in him. It is the language of their hearts, Whom have we in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that we desire besides thee. And as the gospel continually opens more and more the character, perfections and operations of the Deity, so it serves continually to enlarge the hearts of believers towards him. As they grow in the knowledge of the gospel, they grow in the knowledge of God, which never fails to expand and enlarge their hearts in every holy and devout affection. They feel more and more interested in his glory, and in every thing which tends to promote it.

2. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers towards Christ. He is the great and glorious personage who is no where revealed but in the gospel. The light of nature discovers no Saviour for sinners. But the gospel reveals Christ, the second person in the ever blessed Trinity, as assuming human nature, and in that nature suffering and dying on the cross to atone for the sins of the world, and render it consistent with all the perfections of God the Father, to pardon and save the guilty children of men. It represents this same Saviour as possessed of every divine attribute, as seated at the right hand of God,

and as Head over all things to the church. It displays his astonishing grace and condescension in laying down his life, that all true believers might live and reign with him for ever. As their knowledge of the gospel therefore increases, their love, their gratitude and their whole hearts are enlarged towards Christ. He appears more amiable, more glorious and infinitely more worthy of admiration and esteem, than any or all created beings. He appears to be the perfection of beauty and excellence, and altogether lovely. Accordingly the apostle prayed that the hearts of believers might be enlarged through faith in Christ. He besought God to grant "that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; that being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God." Thus the gospel directly tends to enlarge the hearts of believers, by exhibiting to their view the great and glorious character of Christ, and what he has done and suffered for their good and the good of the universe.

3. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers towards the church of Christ. Those who embrace the gospel, embrace all who apparently belong to the number of his friends and followers. They "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Those who are united to Christ through faith in the gospel, are also united with his whole family in heaven and earth, and with all who have been and shall be redeemed from among men. The gospel leads all who embrace it to extend their love of complacence to all the members of the church of Christ, whether they sit together in earthly, or in heavenly places. If one of these members rejoice, they all rejoice with it; or if one of these members suffer, they all suffer with it. Their enlarged hearts take in all the friends of Christ, in every age, and in every part of the world. Every true believer can say with David, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." And as the gospel continually enlarges the views of christians in regard to the church, so it continually enlarges their hearts towards it, and makes them feel more deeply interested in its prosperity.

4. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers towards all

mankind. The gospel is founded in universal benevolence, and tends to diffuse the same spirit in the hearts of all who embrace it. Paul's heart was once confined to his own personal interest; but as soon as he embraced the gospel, his heart was enlarged in benevolence towards all the nations of the earth. His heart's desire and prayer to God was, that both Jews and Gentiles might know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent. The gospel still has the same effect upon all who cordially embrace it. They feel interested in the temporal and eternal good of all mankind. Their benevolent hearts are continually expanding towards all nations, as their knowledge of their perishing condition increases. It is the gracious design of the gospel to spread holiness and happiness among all nations; and those who embrace it, cordially approve of this design; and their hearts extend as far as the design of the gospel extends, and dispose them to seek and promote the salvation of perishing sinners all over the world. They feel as angels feel in respect to the success of the gospel, who rejoice when one sinner repenteth, when one addition is made to the number of Christ's friends, and when one soul is saved from the wrath to come.

5. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers towards all created beings, whether holy or unholy, and towards every living creature. The righteous man regards the good of every creature capable of enjoying good, from the highest angel to the smallest insect. These all belong to God, and are a part of his interest. He regards with an equal and impartial eye all his intelligent and unintelligent creatures. And as all these are employed to promote the design of the gospel, so those who embrace it feel interested in every created being in the universe. God has employed all the angels, good and bad, to carry into effect the gracious design of the gospel. And he has constantly employed the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven, as well as every human creature, to promote the same important end. Hence every creature is really valuable, as connected with the gospel; and therefore all who embrace it, must feel their hearts enlarged, to encircle in the arms of their benevolence all the creatures of God.

6. The gospel enlarges the hearts of believers to take an interest in all the events that ever have been and ever will be brought to pass. They all stand inseparably connected with the great and extensive design of the gospel; which assures believers that all things are theirs, whether past, present or to come, and shall eventually work together for their good. They must feel interested in that great transaction in eternity, when the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost concerted the great

scheme of redemption. They must feel interested in the creation, preservation and government of the world; in all past and present events which come to their knowledge; in all the events predicted in the scriptures of truth; in the transactions of the last day; and in all the future scenes of eternity. Every true believer has an important interest in every thing that has existed, and that ever will exist. And so far as he understands and loves the gospel, his heart is growing more and more extensive, as his real interests appear to increase. And it is the direct tendency of the gospel to enlarge his heart until it extends to the utmost bounds of creation, and feels interested in every created and uncreated object.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the gospel tends to enlarge the views and hearts of those who embrace it, then unbelievers have no just ground to object against it as enfeebling the minds and contracting the hearts of men. They have often and strenuously objected against the gospel, as having a tendency to belittle and enfeeble both the natural and moral powers of the mind, and to unfit mankind for great and noble actions; and for this reason they wish it might be disbelieved, rejected, and banished out of the world. Nor is this opinion confined to professed infidels, but is adopted by many who profess to believe the gospel. How many men of eminence both in public and private stations, who are in the sanguine pursuit of what they deem great and noble objects, are very averse from embracing the gospel, because they imagine it would contract their views, cool their zeal, and weaken their exertions to obtain the great things they have in hope and prospect! How many parents are afraid that their children should embrace the gospel and become serious and religious; which they imagine would restrain them from vanity and ambition, and prevent them from making their fortunes, and raising their reputation in the view of the world! And how many of the rising generation neglect and oppose religion for the sake of appearing more gay, more sprightly, more manly and more noble, in the eyes of those whose favor they wish to secure! But this objection made by so many against the gospel, is absolutely groundless, absurd and criminal. For it appears from what has been said, that the gospel has a direct tendency to enlarge the heart, and expand the views, the hopes and prospects, of all who embrace it. And this is confirmed by innumerable instances of its expanding and ennobling influence upon the understandings and hearts of men. Did it not enlarge the heart and invigorate the mind of young Moses,

of young Joseph, of young Joshua, of young Samuel, of young David, of young Solomon, of young Josiah, of young Jabez, of young Daniel, and of young Paul? Who ever had greater and nobler objects in view than these pious young men? or who ever pursued their great and noble objects with more zeal, fortitude, resolution, wisdom and success? Who ever made a greater and better figure on the stage of life? or who ever went off the stage of life with more dignity, or brighter hopes and prospects? Do you ask how the gospel produced such great and good effects upon the minds of these pious men? The answer is plain and intelligible. It caused them to renounce low, mean, vain, trifling objects, and raised their attention to divine and eternal objects, which expanded their views, and enlarged their hearts, and fired their zeal to promote the glory of God and the everlasting good of their fellow men. And it is the natural tendency of the gospel to produce such happy effects, in a greater or less degree, upon the hearts and lives of all who embrace it. How happy would it be for the young and the old, the high and the low, to embrace the gospel, which would make them wise and great and useful and happy in time and eternity!

2. If the gospel tends to enlarge the hearts of those who embrace it, then we see why the scripture represents believers as far more amiable and excellent than unbelievers. God, who perfectly knows the worth, the excellence and importance of all classes of men, represents saints as far more amiable, excellent and valuable than sinners. He says, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor." He says, "The saints are the excellent of the earth." He calls them his jewels, his treasure, his inheritance, his glory. He measures the greatness, the goodness, and the worth of men by their hearts; and according to this standard, sinners are lighter than vanity in comparison with the righteous, whose understandings are expanded, and whose hearts are enlarged by the great truths and great objects exhibited in the gospel. How superior was Moses to Pharaoh, Mordecai to Haman, and Paul to the philosophers of Athens. God weighs men in an equal balance; and when the greatest, the wisest, the richest and the best of sinners are weighed in his balance, they are all found wanting; and are as chaff to the wheat, in comparison with saints. When Belshazzar was thrown into the balance with Daniel, he was lighter than a feather in comparison with that great and good man. The heart of the greatest and best sinner in the world is small, mean and contracted, in comparison with the benevolent, enlarged heart of the least saint on earth. The largest heart that any sinner ever possessed and carried about with him, was never

larger than a part, or the whole of this small, changeable and perishing world; but the heart of the least christian is as large and boundless as eternity. His love is eternal love; his hope is an eternal hope; his inheritance is an eternal inheritance; and his joy is an eternal joy. But the love, the hope, the inheritance and joy of the sinner is temporary, and but a preface to everlasting sorrow and despair. How different will the righteous and wicked appear when their hearts shall be disclosed in another world! Then the righteous will shine forth in all the beauties of benevolence in the kingdom of their Father, while the wicked will appear in all the meanness and turpitude of selfishness. It will then be made manifest that God did not represent saints in too good, nor sinners in too bad a light, in his word. He knew the essential difference between them before, as well as he did after they left the world; and he drew their characters according to that essential distinction. And though sinners denied the distinction in time, they will be constrained to acknowledge it to all eternity.

3. If the gospel enlarges the hearts of those who embrace it, then they sincerely desire that the gospel may be universally known and embraced. Before the gospel had enlarged the heart of the apostle Paul, he was perfectly opposed to the spread of the gospel, and to its happy influence upon the hearts of men. His heart was so selfish and contracted that he had no concern for the salvation of his own, or any other nation, but did all in his power to prevent the spread of the gospel and its happy influence upon the hearts of men. But as soon as the gospel had illuminated his understanding and enlarged his own heart, it was his heart's desire and prayer to God, not only that his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, might be saved, but that the gospel might be carried all round the world and produce its saving influence upon all the nations of the earth. His benevolent heart esteemed it a privilege to be employed in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to Jews and Gentiles. His heart was so large that he could wish to sacrifice both his temporal and eternal interests, if that might be the means of spreading the knowledge and the saving benefits of the gospel among his own and other nations. The gospel expanded the views and enlarged the hearts of all the other apostles and primitive christians, and fired their zeal to labor, suffer and die, for the sake of the gospel and the salvation of a world lying in wickedness. And the same gospel has produced the same benevolent and enlarged views, desires and exertions of those who have ever since clearly understood and cordially embraced it. Who have done so much to gain the low, mean, momentary objects of this world, as christians have

done to spread the gospel, to promote religion, and to save the souls of men? The believers of the gospel have sacrificed their property, their reputation, and in ten thousand instances their lives, in seeking to enlighten the minds, extend the views and enlarge the hearts of the high and low triflers on the stage of action. They are grieved to see the narrow views and feelings and conduct of the men of the world, who never spend a thought upon the greatest and best objects in the universe, and never felt, nor expressed, nor enjoyed the ennobling and benevolent spirit of the gospel. You remember the noble and happy effect which the gospel had upon Zaccheus, the very day he embraced it. He promptly and cheerfully gave away one half of his goods; and it is not very improbable that it disposed him to give away another half before he died. Primitive christians took the spoiling of their goods cheerfully, knowing that they had a more enduring substance laid up for them in heaven. Those who understand and love the gospel, place their happiness in the happiness of others, and desire above all things that others should enjoy the same spirit and blessings of the gospel which they possess and enjoy. Having entered into the gospel kingdom, they most sincerely and ardently desire to bring as many others into it as they can.

4. If the gospel enlarges the hearts of those who embrace it, then they know by experience, that they cannot serve God and mammon. As soon as their hearts are enlarged towards God, towards Christ, towards his great and glorious kingdom, and towards all the human race, these great objects crowd out of their views and affections all inferior objects, or dispose them to give them only their low and subordinate place. They no longer occupy the supreme place in their hearts, and are regarded only as means of promoting objects infinitely greater and more valuable. Believers are conscious that two supreme objects cannot exist in their minds at one and the same time. They are conscious that whenever they love the world and the things of the world, the love of the Father is not in them. They feel bound in duty to watch their hearts and keep them with all diligence, lest the low and trivial objects of the world should engross their attention and affections supremely, becloud their minds, and hide from their view and contemplation the glorious scenes and objects of the heavenly world. Herein sincere believers differ from insincere believers. Insincere believers desire and endeavor to serve both God and mammon. They mean to serve God as much as they imagine it will help them to gain and enjoy the world, and no more. When the service of God comes in competition with the service of mammon, they mean to neglect the service of God. But sincere

believers feel and act differently. They will not neglect the service of God to serve themselves. They mean to keep their hearts in subjection to God, and the world in subjection to their hearts. They maintain a constant warfare between benevolence and selfishness, and always loathe and condemn themselves, whenever their selfishness gains the ascendency over their benevolence. Though Paul delighted in the law of God after the inward man, yet he found a law that when he would do good, evil was present with him; which made him exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Whatever withdraws their hearts from God and his service, is burdensome and hateful to real christians.

5. If the gospel enlarges the hearts of those who embrace it, then they sincerely and ardently desire to know more and more about it. As new born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. As soon as the understanding of any person is enlightened, and his heart is enlarged, he immediately desires to know more and more about Christ, about God, about the moral state of this world, and the moral state of the invisible and eternal world. And as the heart of every believer enlarges, his desires after greater and greater knowledge of God and divine truths continually increase. Though Paul had as clear and extensive knowledge of the gospel as any man, yet he regretted his remaining ignorance of it, and ardently desired and endeavored to make greater advances in the knowledge of it. And this is true of every true believer. He finds that the knowledge of the gospel extends his views and enlarges his heart towards God, and all his works of creation, providence and grace. It is a dark sign that any person has not rightly understood and embraced the gospel, if he imagines that he has attained to a perfection of knowledge and grace. The more a man has seen and known of this world, the more he desires to see and know of it; and the more those who have embraced the gospel know of it, the more they desire to know of it. As it enlarges their hearts and extends their views, they see more and more to be known of God, of Christ, and of every thing which stands connected with the great work of redemption, which he has undertaken, has carried on, and will continue to carry on, until it is fully and finally accomplished.

6. If the gospel enlarges the hearts of those who embrace it, then it enables them to perform all the duties which it requires, with great pleasure and delight. David says to God, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." The spirit of the gospel is a spirit of benevolence

towards all beings in the universe, and a spirit of complacence towards all holy, amiable and virtuous beings. And every one knows it is a pleasure to perform any duty towards one to whom he feels benevolently; and every one knows it is pleasure to perform any duty towards one to whom he exercises the love of complacence. The love of benevolence and the love of complacence, which the gospel inspires, prepares all who embrace it to discharge every duty that it requires with pleasure and alacrity. It is a pleasure to those who love God supremely, to obey God universally. Christ loved God, and therefore delighted to do his will. It is a pleasure to those whose hearts are enlarged towards Christ, to obey all his commands. And it is a pleasure to all whose hearts are enlarged towards the whole world, to perform every duty which the gospel requires them to perform, towards even the enemies of all righteousness. The spirit of the gospel prepares all, who embrace it, to obey it.

Finally: Let all inquire whether they have ever embraced the gospel. This subject proposes an infallible test. Has it enlarged your hearts towards God, towards Christ, towards the friends of Christ, towards the cause of Christ, and towards the enemies of Christ? What have you done more than others? What have you desired more than others? What are you willing to do more than others, who do not pretend to embrace the gospel? Have you been more obedient? or have you been more benevolent?

SERMON XXXI.

PRAYER OF SAINTS FOR THE CONSTANT EXERCISE OF HOLY AFFECTIONS.

UNITE my heart to fear thy name. — PSALM lxxxvi. 11.

THE name of God, in this, as in many other places of scripture, is expressive of the whole of the divine character and perfections. The fear of his name denotes that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, and which comprises all that love, esteem, veneration, homage and obedience, which are due from man to his Creator. David's petition, therefore, appears to be a request that God would prepare his heart to worship and serve him in a sincere and acceptable manner. But if this were his meaning, it may seem strange that he should conceive his prayer in such uncommon and unintelligible terms. For where is the propriety of praying for a united heart? Is not the heart always united? Is it not something simple, undivided, and incapable of being disunited, and consequently of being united? If he had prayed that God would give him a good heart, a pure heart, a clean heart, or a wise and understanding heart, his expressions would have been easy and familiar, and his meaning plain and obvious; but when he prays that God would unite his heart to fear his name, it is not so easy to apprehend the propriety of the phrase, or the meaning of the petition. To set this good man's prayer in a plain and profitable light, I shall endeavor to show,

I. That a good man has but one heart;

II. What his heart is;

III. That it needs to be united; and,

IV. That it is proper to pray that it may be united.

I. I am to show that a good man has not two hearts.

Though none may have said, in so many words, that a good man has two hearts, yet many have said what implies it. They have often asserted that a saint has an old heart and a new heart; that he has an old sinful principle and a new gracious principle; that he has an old selfish disposition and a new benevolent disposition; and that he has an old bad taste and a new good taste. All these expressions convey the same idea, and imply that every one who has been born again, or has experienced a saving change, has both a holy and unholy heart, or both a holy and unholy principle, or both a holy and unholy disposition, or both a holy and unholy taste; which amounts to his having both a good and a bad heart at the same time. That this is their real meaning, appears from their denying that a new heart takes away any part of an old heart; or that a new principle takes away any part of an old principle; or that a new disposition takes away any part of an old disposition; or that a new taste takes away any part of an old taste. They suppose that the old heart, or the old principle, or the old disposition, or the old taste, remains entirely the same after, as before regeneration. This supposition plainly and necessarily implies that every real christian, or subject of grace, has two hearts. But David was not of this opinion. He did not suppose that he had two hearts. He does not pray that God would unite his old and new heart, or his old and new principle, or his old and new disposition, or his old and new taste; but his one, only heart. Nor do we find a single instance in the Bible, of any good man's asserting, pretending, or saying any thing which implied that he had two hearts. It is no less absurd to say my hearts, than to say my understandings, or my consciences; but there would be no absurdity in this mode of expression, if the old heart remains the same after a new heart is given in regeneration. The truth is, the new heart destroys the old heart; so that a person after regeneration as well as before, has but one heart. Accordingly, God says to his sinful people in Babylon, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Here the giving of a new heart is represented as the same thing as the taking away of the old heart. And the apostle tells christians that by putting on the new man, they had put off the old man; and that by walking in the Spirit, they did not walk in the flesh. In a word, the whole current of scripture represents a good heart as excluding a bad heart; so that a good heart and a bad heart never exist in the same mind, at the same time. It is, therefore, as con-

trary to scripture, as to reason and common sense, that a good man ever has two hearts. I now proceed to show,

II. What his one heart is.

As the eye, by which we discover external objects, seldom discovers itself, so the soul, by which we discover other things, seldom turns its attention inward to survey its own powers or faculties. And this is one reason why we find it more difficult to distinguish and describe the properties of the soul, than the properties of the body. We know, however, that the soul has neither length, nor breadth, nor figure, nor visibility, nor any other property of matter; and consequently we know that it is not a material, but a spiritual substance. As the soul is all spirit, so it is all activity. We can form no idea of a dormant, inactive spirit. Separate activity from the soul, and its existence is no longer conceivable. But though the soul be all spirit and activity, yet we are conscious of its distinct powers or properties. We are conscious of having perception, reason, conscience, memory and volition. These are the essential properties of the soul; and in these properties the essence of the soul consists. We can form no conception of the soul as distinct from these properties, or as the foundation of them. The essential properties of the soul constitute its essence, as much as the essential properties of matter constitute the essence of matter. This is true, and is acknowledged to be true by a late celebrated author. Now if perception be distinct from reason, and reason be distinct from conscience, and conscience be distinct from memory, and memory be distinct from volition, then the heart must consist in volition, or free voluntary moral exercise, and in nothing previous to it, or the foundation of it.

We never attach praise or blame to the exercise of perception, or reason, or conscience, or memory; but we do attach praise or blame to the free, voluntary exercise of loving or hating, of choosing or refusing. The heart, therefore, which is the seat of all moral exercises, consists in nothing but moral exercises. It certainly does not consist in perception, or reason, or conscience, or memory; for these are all natural faculties, which are totally destitute of every moral quality to which praise or blame can be attached; but it may and does consist in loving and hating, in choosing and refusing; for these are free, voluntary exercises, which are always right or wrong, and worthy of praise or blame. Neither reason nor scripture affords any ground to suppose that the heart consists in a principle, or disposition, or taste, which is the root, or source, or foundation of all free and voluntary exercises. We never approve or disapprove of any thing in ourselves or others, but free, voluntary exercises; and God requires and forbids nothing but free and vol-

untary exercises, in his word. All that the divine law requires summarily consists in pure benevolence; and all it summarily forbids consists in pure selfishness. Benevolence is a free, voluntary exercise, and selfishness is a free, voluntary exercise; and every human heart consists in a train of free, voluntary, benevolent exercises, or in a train of free, voluntary, selfish exercises, or in a train of both benevolent and selfish exercises. A sinner's heart consists in a train of mere selfish affections; but a saint's heart consists in a train of both benevolent and selfish exercises. The best of saints are imperfectly holy in this life; and their imperfection in holiness consists in their sometimes having holy, and sometimes unholy affections. Their holy and unholy affections are always distinct, and never blended together. Their holy exercises are never partly holy and partly unholy, but perfectly holy; and their unholy exercises are never partly holy, but perfectly unholy. A train of holy and unholy affections forms the heart of a saint; but a train of constant, uninterrupted sinful affections forms the heart of a sinner. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil, only evil continually. The only proper notion of any human heart, as distinguished from all the powers or faculties of the mind, is a series of free, voluntary exercises or affections. And the only proper idea of a good man's heart, as distinguished from the heart of a sinner, is a train of both holy and unholy affections, or exercises. So that the heart of a saint essentially differs from the heart of a sinner in this one respect, that the heart of a saint has some holy, as well as unholy exercises, but the heart of a sinner has no holy exercises at all. The next thing to be shown is,

III. That the heart of the saint needs to be united.

This appears from the description which has been given of his heart. It is composed of a series of both good and evil exercises, which are distinct from and diametrically opposite to each other. His good exercises, therefore, may be disunited from one another by the intervention of evil exercises; and then his heart is divided. When his good exercises follow one another in a constant succession, without any interruption by evil exercises, then his heart may be said to be united; but when his good affections are interrupted by those of a directly opposite nature, then his heart is ununited, and discomposed. The constant succession of good exercises may be sometimes longer, and sometimes shorter. Good men may be in the fear of the Lord, or in the exercise of holy affections, from day to day, and from time to time, for a long period, with very few interruptions. Or their good exercises may be interrupted from day to day, and from hour to hour, by evil exercises, for an

indefinite time. A number of good affections may be followed by an equal or a smaller number of evil affections; or one good affection may be followed with one evil affection, in a rapid succession. In all these cases, the hearts of saints may be said to be disunited. Such interruption in the succession of their holy exercises, they all experience. They find their hearts divided, and first drawn one way, and then another; first fixed upon God, and then upon the world. This was evidently the case with David, when he prayed to God and said, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." It is owing to the contrariety of affections in the hearts of good men, that they are so often required to act with a perfect heart, with the whole heart, and with all the heart; and that they are so often blamed for acting not with a perfect heart. While Caleb, Hezekiah, Job, and other good men, persevered in obedience to the divine commands, they are said to serve God with a perfect heart; but when Amaziah sometimes did, and sometimes did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord, he is said to serve him, but not with a perfect heart. When good men act from discordant motives, they act from a disunited and imperfect heart. And how often do they find, upon reflection, this mark of their moral imperfection! But if their good affections followed one another in a constant and uninterrupted succession, their hearts would be united; and being united, would be absolutely perfect. The perfect holiness of Adam, in his primitive state, wholly consisted in the constant and uninterrupted succession of his holy affections. The perfect holiness of just men in heaven, consists in the constant and uninterrupted succession of their holy affections. Nor could there be the least moral imperfection in the hearts of good men in this world, if their affections were constantly holy, without any interruption by affections of an opposite and sinful nature. The reason why the heart of a good man needs to be united, is, because it is disunited by a contrariety of affections; and not because his affections are too weak, or low, or languid. If this were the case, there could be no propriety in desiring, as David did, that his heart might be united; but only that his heart might be strengthened, or his gracious affections raised to a higher degree of ardor. But if every holy affection be perfectly holy, without any mixture of sin, then the only way to raise the ardor of a holy heart is, to make the succession of holy affections more constant and less interrupted; or, in other words, to unite one holy affection so intimately with another, that there should be no time, nor room, for any sinful affection to intervene, interrupt, or cool the ardor of divine love. Having shown that it is necessary that a good man's heart should be united, it only remains to show,

IV. That there is a propriety in his praying that God would unite his heart.

All good men are conscious of their imperfections in holiness, and of their dependence upon God to carry on the good work which he has begun in their hearts, whether their hearts consist in mere voluntary moral exercises, or not. They are more willing than other men to acknowledge that their hearts are in the hand of God, who can turn them whithersoever he pleaseth, as the rivers of water are turned; that the preparations of their hearts and the answer of their tongues are from the Lord; and that it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. There is, then, no occasion of showing the propriety of their praying to God in general for the sanctifying influences of his Spirit; but there is occasion in this discourse, of showing the propriety of their praying to God in particular, that he would unite their hearts to fear his name, or to obey his commands. The propriety of this arises from their hearts' being disunited by a contrariety in their affections. On this ground David felt the propriety of constantly praying to God to unite his heart in holy affections, which he found were continually liable to be interrupted and disunited by selfish and sinful affections. He prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me." Again he prays, "Quicken thou me according to thy word. I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Again he cries, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." Each of these petitions implies that he desired God to unite his disunited heart, by producing new holy affections in it, and thereby excluding unholy affections from it. And it is proper that every good man should make the same petition, that God would unite his disunited heart, by producing new holy affections in it. For,

I. Every christian finds that his heart is more or less disunited, in the manner that has been described. He finds that not only his love, his fear, his faith and other gracious affections are sometimes what he calls low and languid, but actually interrupted by directly opposite exercises. He finds opposition, instead of submission; unbelief, instead of faith; the love of the world, instead of love to God; and aversion to duty, instead of delight in it. These are positive exercises of sinful affections, which are diametrically opposed to positive exercises of grace. He knows, by sensible experience, that his holy affections are not merely low and languid, but actually interrupted and excluded by the existence and interference of sinful affections, which divide and distract his heart, and disturb his peace and comfort in every duty and enjoyment. Now nothing can re-

move this painful effect without removing the cause; and nothing can remove the cause, but the removal of sinful affections; and nothing can remove sinful affections, but gracious affections; and nothing can unite the heart, but the increase of gracious affections. If it be proper, therefore, that christians should pray that they may delightfully, constantly and faithfully perform every duty, then it is proper that they should pray that God would unite their hearts, by giving them such holy affections as will exclude every sinful exercise. This leads me to observe,

2. That it is proper for christians to pray that God would unite their disunited hearts, because no external means or motives will produce this effect, without his special influence. They may read the Bible, hear the gospel preached, and constantly attend all external duties and divine ordinances, and be tried with both mercies and afflictions, and still their hearts remain disunited, unless God exerts his special power to produce gracious affections in them. No external means or motives can produce holy love, or holy fear, or holy faith, or any other holy affection, without the special and powerful exertion of divine grace. As it exclusively belongs to God to produce the first, so it exclusively belongs to him to produce the second, and every succeeding exercise of grace in the heart of a christian. It appears from the experience and language of one of the best of men, that though he sought, he never found perfection in holiness in his probationary state. Paul says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Such perfection in holiness he ardently desired, in order that his disunited heart might be united, and freed from the distressing conflict between his holy and unholy affections. He says, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He knew that no speculative knowledge, that no external means or motives, could remove his inward conflict, his spiritual warfare, and give him that peace which the world could not give nor take away. He felt the propriety and necessity of praying that God would renew, enlarge and purify his heart, by more constantly producing and increasing right affections in it. If the speculative knowledge which Paul possessed, and the means of grace which he enjoyed, were insufficient to produce those holy affections which were necessary to unite his disunited heart, then no

christian has any ground to depend upon the speculative knowledge which he possesses, and the means of grace which he enjoys, to unite his disunited heart. The moral imperfection of every christian throws him into the sovereign hand of God, to mould and form his heart as he sees fit. And this renders it not only proper, but necessary, that every christian should pray that God would unite his disunited heart, and give him that peace which passeth all understanding. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, in the Christian race, but of God that showeth mercy. The strongest, as well as the weakest christians, are equally and constantly dependent upon God to give them more love, more faith, more submission, more zeal and more fortitude to fight the good fight of faith, to perform every good work, and to finish their course with joy.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If every christian has but one heart, and that heart consists in moral exercises, then no person is passive in regeneration. Those who maintain that men are passive in regeneration, found their opinion entirely upon the supposition that in regeneration a new principle, disposition, or taste, is created in the mind, which is prior to, and the foundation of, all holy exercises. And were this supposition true, it would be equally true that men are passive, and not active, in regeneration. If a new principle, or a new disposition, or a new taste, be produced in their mind without their activity, and previous to their exercising love, or faith, or any other holy affection, then they must be entirely passive in passing from spiritual death to spiritual life. But if every human heart, whether good or evil, consists in moral exercises, then there is no occasion of God's implanting a new, dormant, passive principle in regeneration, in order to produce a new holy heart. In order to give a man a new heart, all that needs to be done is to produce new holy affections, in which he must necessarily be active. We cannot conceive that a man should be turned from sin to holiness, without his own activity in exercising holy affections instead of sinful ones. Were it true that men are passive in regeneration, there would be no propriety in God's requiring them to make a new heart and a new spirit; or in requiring them to exercise love, repentance, faith, or any other holy affection; until he had actually produced a new passive principle in their minds. For, if a new heart consisted in a new passive principle, it would be as absolutely and naturally impossible for them to make a new heart, as to make a new understanding, or any other new natural faculty of the mind. But if a new heart consists in new holy

affections, then there is the same propriety in God's requiring sinners to make a new heart, as in requiring them to love him, instead of hating him. It is impossible to see the justice of the divine law, or the distinction between men's natural and moral inability to love God, without understanding wherein a good heart consists, and what God does in producing it. If a good heart consists in good exercises, and if in producing it God produces nothing but good exercises, in which men are active, then it is easy to reconcile the doctrine of regeneration with the precepts of the divine law, and the moral obligation of all sinners to obey it. But the doctrine of passive regeneration is repugnant to reason, conscience, and every command in the Bible.

2. If a good heart consists in good affections, which are continually liable to be interrupted by affections of an opposite nature, then it is easy to see wherein the deceitfulness of the heart consists. It is a common complaint that the heart is deceitful, and scripture represents it to be extremely so; yea, as deceitful above all things. And on this account Solomon asserts that "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." The assertion is indefinite and unlimited, and applies to all men, whether saints or sinners. If the heart consisted in a mere dormant, inactive principle, it could not be deceitful, nor properly be called deceitful. But if it consists in moral, free, voluntary exercises, then it may be deceitful, and its deceitfulness may be discovered. Its deceitfulness consists in its mutability. It is as unstable as water. It is every moment liable to change. Good men never know beforehand how soon the best motions of their hearts may be interrupted by directly opposite exercises. They may feel right, intend right, resolve right to-day; but to-morrow their good feelings, good intentions and good resolutions may be superseded and excluded by directly opposite views and motives. To-day they may form and resolve to execute some noble, benevolent, and extensively useful design; but to-morrow or next week, they may give it up, from low and mercenary motives. In this respect, St. Paul found his heart to be deceitful. "For," says he, "to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do." In the same manner Peter's heart deceived him. When Christ expressly told his disciples that he must go up to Jerusalem, and be crucified and slain by wicked hands, Peter's love to him grew warm, and kindled into a flame of pious zeal. He felt the spirit of a martyr, and boldly declared that he would rather die, than that such things should be done to his Master. And there can be no doubt but, at that time, he would have fulfilled his resolutions, and laid down his life for Christ. For

when Judas and his company arrested him in the garden, Peter drew his sword, and would have cut off the head, as well as ear, of the high priest's servant, had not Christ required him to exercise patience rather than courage, and to use spiritual rather than carnal weapons. But after Christ was taken and carried before the tribunal of his mortal enemies, Peter's love and zeal failed him, and with a false tongue and a wicked heart, he profanely denied his Master. While Peter felt a pure love and zeal for Christ, he thought his love and zeal would continue; but the instability of his heart deceived him. And Paul, while in the exercise of good affections, was ready to imagine that his good affections would continue unshaken; but he found, by painful experience, that his good intentions and resolutions deceived him, by their mutability. In the same manner, it seems, Hazael's heart deceived him. When the prophet, with tears in his eyes, told him what evils he would do, he had no intention, nor expectation, that he should ever destroy his king and usurp his kingdom. But his good intention to find a remedy to preserve his king's life, was almost directly followed by his base and ungrateful intention to murder him. Both good and bad men are extremely apt to trust in their own hearts; and though they have often been deceived by them, yet they will hope against hope, and believe against evidence, that their hearts will not be so deceitful in time to come as they have been in times past. And so long as they retain this confidence in their hearts, they will certainly be disappointed. For so long as their hearts consist in discordant exercises, which alternately follow one another, they can have no solid ground of security against their instability and deception. Their own resolutions are like their other good exercises, liable to change, by all the objects with which they are surrounded, by all the scenes they pass through, and by the great adversary who lies in wait to deceive.

3. If the hearts of good men consist in free, voluntary exercises, then they ought to be perfectly holy in this life. For if they ought to have one holy exercise, then they ought to have another and another, in a constant, uninterrupted succession. They have no right to exercise one selfish, sinful affection. And they are just as capable of exercising good affections as bad affections. Accordingly, God requires them to love him supremely and constantly, and forbids them to exercise one single selfish affection. He does not, indeed, require them to put away any bad principle, for he knows that they have no bad principle to put away; nor does he require them to cultivate, cherish or improve any good principle, for he knows that he has never implanted any good principle in them. But he does re-

quire them to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; to cease to set their affections on things below, and to set them on things above. He does require them to serve him with a perfect heart, and with all the heart; and he does condemn them, whenever they do not serve him with a perfect heart. That is, he requires them always to exercise holy affections, and forbids them ever to exercise unholy affections. And this is the same thing as to require them to be perfectly holy in this life. The reason why many suppose that even good men are not bound to be perfectly holy, is, that they have derived a sinful principle from Adam, which they are under a natural inability to remove, and which no holy affections can destroy. But this is an unfounded and unscriptural opinion. They have no corrupt or depraved principle; they have only corrupt, sinful and selfish affections, which they might entirely remove from their heart by the exercise of holy affections. They are, therefore, altogether inexcusable for not putting away all their moral depravity, and becoming perfectly holy. All their remaining depravity is voluntary depravity, which they might entirely banish from their hearts by the constant, voluntary exercise of pure, holy love. It is their constant and indispensable duty to keep themselves always in the love of God, and continually exercise perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. There is nothing to hinder them from attaining sinless perfection, but their voluntary neglect of exercising the same holy affections at all times, which they do actually and cheerfully exercise at some times.

4. If a good heart consists in holy exercises, then the gospel as really requires perfect holiness, as the law. Some suppose there is a wide difference between the precepts of the law, and the precepts of the gospel. They allow that the precepts of the law require perfect holiness, but they imagine that the precepts of the gospel do not require perfect holiness. But if all holiness consists in the exercises of the heart, then every exercise of holiness is perfect holiness. Every exercise of true love is perfect love. Every exercise of true repentance is perfect repentance. Every exercise of true faith is perfect faith. And every exercise of true submission is perfect submission. The precepts of the gospel, therefore, require perfect holiness, as much as the precepts of the law. The difference between the law and the gospel does not lie in their precepts, but in their promises. The law promises eternal life to nothing short of the constant, uninterrupted exercise of holy affections, and condemns the man who indulges one selfish, sinful affection; but the gospel promises eternal life to every one who perseveres in holy exercises, though they are interrupted in a thousand instances. The gospel requires constant exercises of holy affections;

yet, nevertheless, it pardons in case of failure. The gospel does not allow, or approve of one sin; yet it pardons innumerable transgressions upon the condition of faith and repentance. The gospel has made no abatement in respect to the requisition and obligation of duty; but it has made provision for the salvation of those who do not yield that perfect obedience to God which his law requires. In this respect, the law and gospel differ; but not in their precepts, prohibitions and penalties. The gospel requires the same supreme and constant love to God that the law requires.

5. If the hearts of saints consist altogether in moral and voluntary exercises, then they never have any more holiness than they have holy exercises. Many suppose that good men are much better than their good exercises. For when their exercises are not good, still they have a good principle, or good heart abiding in them, which is indeed the essence of all goodness. But if they have no good principle or good heart distinct from their good exercises, then they cannot have any more goodness than they have good affections. Some have supposed that christians may live days, and months, and even years, in a dull, stupid, lifeless state, their principle of grace continuing, but not in proper, sensible exercises. This is both a groundless and dangerous doctrine. It is groundless, because christians have no such principle of grace; all grace consisting in exercise. And it is dangerous, because it has a direct tendency to make men think they are christians who were never subjects of saving grace; and to make real christians imagine that they are better than they are, and sincerely doing their duty, while they live in the total neglect of it. It is probable that those Methodists who profess to believe that they have attained to sinless perfection, build their absurd opinion upon the supposition that grace essentially consists in principle, and not in exercise. For it is difficult to suppose that any man, in his right mind, can make himself believe that all his thoughts, words and actions are constantly and perfectly agreeable to the law of love. It is easy to conceive, however, that if holiness consists altogether in a holy principle, any one who believes this to be true may persuade himself that he has really ceased from sin, and attained to sinless perfection. Indeed, the doctrine that holiness, grace, or a good heart, consists in a principle, and not in exercise, is a fruitful source of many great doctrinal and practical errors.

6. If the hearts of saints consist altogether in free, voluntary exercises, then there is a foundation in their hearts for a spiritual warfare. The contrariety between their holy and unholy exercises, naturally produces a spiritual conflict. Sinners often

find a struggle between sin and conscience; but the warfare which christians experience, arises from the mutual opposition between holy and unholy affections. Their hearts are composed of holy and selfish exercises, which mutually hate and oppose each other. In the exercise of benevolence, they hate selfishness; and in the exercise of selfishness, they hate benevolence. And as they are sensible of the instability of their hearts, they feel a propriety, a necessity and moral obligation to keep them with all diligence, to repel the assaults and intrusion of sinful exercises. They dread the approaching enemy, and find occasion to watch and guard their hearts against every hostile affection, lest they should be brought into captivity to sin. Christians find two contending powers in their hearts, which subject them to a painful conflict, which will never cease, as long as their moral imperfection remains, or their hearts are composed of both holy and unholy affections. But we could not account for this spiritual warfare in christians, if their holiness consisted in a holy principle, and their sinfulness consisted in a sinful principle; for two dormant, inactive principles could never hate, resist and oppose each other, nor could one ever gain the ascendancy over the other. Christians know, by experience, that their spiritual warfare arises wholly from their discordant and conflicting exercises. In the exercise of holiness they hate and oppose all sin; but in the exercise of selfishness, they hate and oppose holy and benevolent exercises. When they love God they hate and oppose the love of the world; but when they love the world the love of God is not in them; or, as our Saviour says, while they serve God they hate to serve mammon; and while they serve mammon, they hate to serve God. The breast of every christian is a field of battle, where sometimes benevolence and sometimes selfishness gains the victory; but there is no solid peace till benevolence repels and excludes selfishness.

7. In the view of this subject christians may see their great moral imperfection. Though they sometimes love God supremely, and serve him with a perfect heart, and the whole heart; though sometimes their holy affections run on cheerfully and uninterruptedly; and though for a while they find a pleasure in doing the will of God; yet they often experience as long a series of unholy as holy affections, and find more pleasure in serving themselves than in serving God. Their hearts are bent to backsliding. They rarely find their hearts perfectly united in their best duties. They often wait upon the Lord with much distraction and confusion of thought. Were the whole train of their affections presented to their own view, as they appear to the omniscient eye of God, they would be

shocked and confounded. Were the whole series of their thoughts and internal exercises printed in a book, or engraven on a rock, as Job desired some of his thoughts and exercises might be, how inconsistent, absurd and criminal would they appear! Or were their meditations and devotions in their most retired and solemn intervals, registered in their own minds as they are registered in the book of God's remembrance, how painful would their reflections be on such occasions! Would they not read in some such language as this? "O Lord, thy ways are equal, but my ways are unequal. O Lord, my ways are equal, but thy ways are unequal. O Lord, thou art good; O Lord, thou art an hard master. O Lord, I am unworthy of the least of thy mercies; O Lord, I do well to complain of thee, in taking away my mercies. O Lord, thy will be done; O Lord, let my will be done. O Lord, let me by thy servant; O Lord, be thou my servant. O Lord, forgive my enemies; O Lord, forgive them not. O Lord, make me to serve my generation according to thy will; O Lord, make my generation serve me contrary to thy will." Now, whether any good man be able or not to recollect the whole train of his past exercises, in both his secular and religious concerns, yet God always sees and observes every thought and imagination of his heart, and views its mixture of holy and unholy affections. How great, then, and how displeasing to God, is the moral imperfection of the best of saints! And how much reason have they to humble themselves before him, and walk softly in his sight! And with what watchfulness and constancy should every christian offer unto God the prayer of the devout Psalmist, "Unite my heart to fear thy name."

SERMON XXXII.

THE CRUCIFIED MALEFACTORS.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. — Luke, xxiii. 39 — 43.

Though all the four evangelists agree in relating some circumstances attending Christ's crucifixion, yet they all differ one from another, in omitting some circumstances attending it. They all mention that Christ was crucified with two persons. John says, "They crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." Matthew says, "Then were two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and the other on the left." Mark says, "And with him they crucified two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left." Luke barely calls them malefactors. Matthew and Mark say that both the malefactors joined with others in reviling him on the cross. Luke mentions only one of them as railing on him; and John mentions nothing that they said. These different accounts of the circumstances of Christ's crucifixion do not contradict one another; and therefore, instead of weakening, serve to confirm the testimony of each evangelist. One only relates what another omitted, which proves that they did not combine together to frame a cunningly devised fable, but that they all wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. There is, therefore, no just ground to discredit what Luke says in the text concerning the discourse and con-

duct of the two malefactors, though no other evangelist gives the same account. Though Matthew and Mark say that both the malefactors reviled Christ, yet what Luke says may be equally true, that one of them reproved the other for railing on him; for both of them might have felt and acted alike for a while, and yet afterwards have widely differed in their views and feelings. Accordingly, I propose to consider,

I. Wherein these two malefactors were alike;

II. When they began to differ; and,

III. Wherein they finally differed.

I. Let us consider wherein these two malefactors were alike. And,

1. They were alike in respect to depravity of heart. They were the descendants of Adam, and, like the rest of his posterity, came into the world in a state of moral depravity. They were totally destitute of true love to God, and under the entire dominion of a depraved heart. Every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was evil, only evil continually. They possessed a carnal mind, which was enmity to God, not subject to his law, neither could be. Their hearts were full of selfish and sinful affections, which totally excluded every spark of holy love or true benevolence. They were dead in trespasses and sins, and altogether destitute of spiritual life. They were both born, grew up, and lived in this sinful and guilty state, till after they became malefactors. This we may justly conclude, from their becoming such abandoned characters. We have no intimation that one was any better than the other, in respect to the total depravity of their hearts.

2. They were alike in respect to their knowledge of Christ. As there is nothing said concerning their being strangers, foreigners, or pagans, we must suppose they were the children of Jewish parents, born and brought up in Jerusalem; where they were circumcised the eighth day, and taught to attend all the private and public duties of religion, according to all the laws of Moses. And as Christ often went up to Jerusalem to attend divine ordinances, it is very possible, if not probable, that these two malefactors, as well as thousands of other stupid and profligate sinners, might have had opportunities of hearing Christ preach, or of seeing him work miracles. But there is no probability that one of them knew any more about Christ than the other, before they were led with him to Calvary, and extended on the cross. I know that some have supposed the penitent malefactor had known more about Christ, and conducted better in general, than the other malefactor; which was the reason he repented, while the other remained obstinate. This however, is a mere conjecture, which has no foundation

in scripture. Both of them might have been, for aught we know to the contrary, totally ignorant of Christ, until the day of their crucifixion. Or both of them might have been equally acquainted with the person, preaching and miracles of Christ, before they were either guilty, or condemned for their crimes. But since all the evangelists are silent respecting their knowledge of Christ, we have no right to suppose that one knew any more about Christ than the other, but ought to presume that they were alike in this respect. We know, however,

3. That they were alike in practice. Though they were born and brought up in Jerusalem, and had been early dedicated to God and instructed in the true religion, yet they were certainly sinners in Zion, and extremely vicious. They violated the laws of God and man. They were guilty of the detestable crime of stealing. Matthew says, speaking of the crucifixion of Christ, " Then were two thieves crucified with him ; one on the right hand, and another on the left." Mark speaking of the same solemn scene, says, " And with him they crucify two thieves ; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left." And Luke calls them both malefactors. It is very probable that they began their vicious course early in life, and followed one evil practice after another, till they were prepared to perpetrate the enormous crimes for which they were condemned to die. We know, therefore,

4. That they were alike in condemnation. They were both apprehended, and brought before a human tribunal, where they were tried, convicted, and doomed to die the painful and reproachful death of the cross. When the day appointed for their execution arrived, they were taken out of prison, and led with Christ, in dreadful formality amidst thousands of spectators, to Mount Calvary, where they were extended on the cross, and where, for some time, they continued to feel and express the astonishing obduracy and malignity of their hearts. Hear what Matthew says respecting their treatment of Christ, while they were suffering with him on the cross. " Then were there two thieves crucified with him ; one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also, the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him : for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also which were crucified with him, cast the same in

his teeth." Mark agrees with Matthew in mentioning the same insulting language and conduct of the spectators of the crucifixion, and subjoins, "they that were crucified with him reviled him." This testimony of the two inspired evangelists leaves us no room to doubt, but that both of the malefactors were alike hardened and impenitent till after they were actually suspended on the cross; for they both joined with the surrounding multitudes in reviling the suffering Saviour. Let us next consider,

II. When they began to differ. Luke tells us, in the text, that they did differ before they died. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" This was not reviling Christ, but reproving his fellow criminal for reviling him. He now felt differently from what he had felt, and from what the other reviler continued to feel. The question now is, when they began to differ. It was not when they received the sentence of death. It was not when they were walking to the place of execution. It was not when they were first nailed to the cross. For after they had gone through those trying and affecting scenes, they both remained hardened and impenitent. Though neither of the evangelists expressly informs us when they began to differ, yet two of them, Matthew and Mark, *implicitly* inform us. Immediately after they have told us that both the thieves reviled Christ, they mention the precise time when the supernatural darkness overspread the land. Matthew says, "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." Mark says, "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." This account of the supernatural darkness, immediately after the account of both the malefactors' reviling Christ, very plainly intimates that they began to differ at the time the darkness began. And we can easily believe that such an unexpected and solemn miracle, on such an awful occasion, did make a deep impression upon the minds of all the spectators of the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, and more upon some than others. It is highly probable, therefore, that some time between the sixth and ninth hour, the difference between the two malefactors began. It now remains to consider,

III. Wherein they eventually and finally differed. Here it may be observed,

1. That one realized the wrath of God abiding upon him, while the other did not. This appears from the pertinent and

solemn reproof which he gave to his wicked, stupid, unfeeling associate. "Dost not thou fear God?" "He is angry with the wicked every day, and this day especially he is displaying his awful displeasure towards this sinful world, and his peculiar displeasure towards us the chief of sinners. I feel now, what I never felt before, the weight of God's wrath. And the thought strikes me with terror and consternation that I am just going into eternity, where I see nothing but that I must suffer the severest tokens of his wrath for ever. We have despised his wrath too long, and even presumed to insult him who calls himself the Son of God; and if he be his Son, will he not resent our malignant and presumptuous conduct, and make us feel, more sensibly than we now feel, the dreadful consequences of our aggravated guilt? My fears are alarmed. I feel as though God would instantly plunge me in everlasting darkness and despair. And have not you reason to fear, as well as I? I tremble for you as well as for myself." This poor, perishing criminal was thoroughly awakened from his long and habitual stupidity, and clearly saw his dangerous condition; which is usually the first step to conversion. He might, however, have seen and felt such danger, and with his eyes open gone to destruction. But,

2. His awakening was followed with conviction. He not only realized that he was exposed to everlasting misery, but was convinced, in his conscience, that he deserved it. Sinners often feel exposed to endless destruction while their conscience is asleep, and they have no genuine conviction that any, or all of their sins deserve perpetual punishment. But when this awakened criminal saw the nature, number and magnitude of his transgressions, his conscience awoke and did its office, and convinced him that he deserved eternal death. So he said to his incorrigible associate, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." This was expressive of his genuine conviction of sin, and of his just desert not only of the condemnation of man, but of the condemnation of God. He felt that he had been justly condemned before a human tribunal, and might be still more justly condemned before the tribunal of God, his supreme and final Judge. For he was now looking into eternity, and felt that he was already and justly condemned, by the righteous law of God, to everlasting death. This, he was convinced in his conscience, was but the due reward of his deeds. But though his fears were alarmed, and his conscience thoroughly convinced, yet he might have retained his enmity and opposition of heart to God, and actually suffered the eternal punishment due to him for sin. There

is reason to fear that multitudes have experienced great awakenings and great convictions, and yet have continued to contend with God, and to refuse to submit to the terms of life proposed in the gospel, till they sunk down into the pit of destruction. And this might have been the case of the awakened and convinced malefactor, had he not become cordially reconciled to the justice of God in casting him off for ever. But it appears,

3. That he did renounce his enmity to God, and become cordially reconciled to his vindictive justice. It is true, indeed, that his barely saying and feeling that he was justly condemned, and received the due reward of his deeds on the cross, was not a certain evidence that he was cordially reconciled to God in his future and eternal condemnation. All the finally condemned at the last day, will feel a full conviction of conscience that the Judge of all the earth has done right in dooming them to endless destruction, while they remain eternally unreconciled to his vindictive justice in their interminable punishment. The convictions of sinners, both in this life and in that which is to come, are so far from diminishing, that they increase their guilt and desert of punishment. But what the malefactor said, after he had acknowledged the justice of God in his condemnation, affords complete evidence that he cordially accepted the punishment of his iniquity, and was heartily willing that God should actually inflict it upon him, if his glory required it. For he directly turned to Christ and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Christ knew his heart, and knew that he justified God and condemned himself in his heart, as well as in his conscience, and exercised unconditional submission to divine sovereignty in saving and destroying guilty sinners. And it was upon the sole ground of his sincere repentance and unreserved submission, that he assured him that he should that day be with him in paradise. It is certain, therefore, that he renounced his enmity to God, and became cordially reconciled to his justice, as well as to his mercy.

4. Having exercised true love, repentance and submission towards God, he exercised a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. His love, repentance and submission towards God prepared him sincerely to desire salvation through the atonement which Christ was then making. He felt his perishing need of a Saviour, and Christ, whom he believed to be what he had professed to be, the Son of God who came to seek and save them that were lost, appeared to be such a Saviour as he needed. For he saw him actually giving his life a ransom for

many, as he had often declared in his preaching that he was about to do. It was a matter of public notoriety, that Jesus of Nazareth had frequently said that he must suffer and die, and rise again on the third day. It was upon the ground of such declarations that his enemies desired Pilate to set a guard around his sepulchre. The penitent malefactor believed Christ's predictions, and that he was then dying to rise again and enter into his kingdom of heaven. And in the language of his faith, he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." This was an expression of his sincere and lively faith in the dying Redeemer, that he was able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. Thus the two malefactors began to differ while hanging on the cross; and they continued to differ as long as they lived, and will continue to differ as long as they exist. The penitent and believing malefactor died, and immediately entered into paradise, where he will continue for ever perfectly holy, and perfectly happy. And the impenitent and unbelieving malefactor died, and immediately sunk down into a state of unalterable and eternal sin and misery. I now proceed to the improvement of the subject.

What has been said in this discourse may serve to throw light upon some important subjects which have been supposed to be dark and difficult to understand.

1. It appears from the conduct of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of unconditional submission is founded in fact. He really felt and expressed a cordial and unreserved submission to God, when he expected in a few moments to sink down into the pit of endless destruction. While he was suffering the excruciating pains of the cross, while his sins were set in order before him, while he had a clear view of an awful and miserable eternity, and before Christ had given him the least intimation that he would pardon and save him, he expressed a filial fear of God, and cordially justified his conduct in condemning him to eternal destruction. And he reproved his wicked and stupid associate for not having the same views and feelings which he had in his own mind. "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." This reproof flowed from his heart, as well as from his conscience. He loved God so well that he could not bear to hear him reproached; and he hated sin so much that he could not refrain from condemning it in himself and others. He loved God so well that he could praise and justify his conduct, though cast out of his favor and suffering his righteous displeasure for ever. This is what the scripture means by sinners accepting the punishment of their iniquity; and this is what we

mean by their exercising unconditional submission. We find, therefore, that the true doctrine of unconditional submission is founded in fact. Be it so, as many say, that Moses did not exercise unconditional submission when he desired God to blot him out of his book upon a certain condition; be it so, that Paul did not exercise unconditional submission when he said he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren according to the flesh; be it so, that there is no text in the Bible that expressly requires men to exercise unconditional submission; yet it will always remain true in fact, that the penitent malefactor did exercise unconditional submission. And this fact proves that any penitent sinner may exercise unconditional submission. And it equally proves that every penitent sinner must exercise unconditional submission, in order to be saved. I know that we often hear it said that it is morally impossible that sinners should exercise unconditional submission, because it is entirely contrary to the human heart, or that love to self which is natural to every man. It is readily conceded that it is morally impossible for any sinner under the influence of his unrenewed, natural and impenitent heart, to exercise unconditional submission; yet this is no evidence that a sinner under the influence of a holy, benevolent, penitent heart, cannot exercise unconditional submission. For we find that one sinner under such a holy, benevolent, penitent heart, did actually exercise unconditional submission. I know we often hear it said that though it be morally possible for penitent sinners to exercise unconditional submission, yet there is no necessity or occasion for their exercising such submission in order to be saved. But the penitent malefactor, while standing on the verge of time and the borders of eternity, without any hope of escaping eternal death, the proper wages of sin, found an occasion, and even a necessity, of exercising unconditional submission in order to believe and be saved. Had he not been truly penitent and submissive to divine sovereignty, he could not have looked, with an eye of love and faith, to the dying Redeemer to save him. Or had he looked with any other than a submissive heart, he would have looked in vain. Christ would have let him perish with the other malefactor. Now there is a time when every penitent sinner is totally uncertain whether he shall be saved or lost; and at that time, he feels the propriety and necessity of exercising unconditional submission; and he does actually exercise it. It is as certain that he exercises unconditional submission, as it is that he believes in Christ, and renounces all self dependence and self righteousness. And it is equally true, that every christian under the hidings of God's face, and when he loses his hope, finds a propriety and neces-

sity of exercising unconditional submission, and can find no peace till he does it. Only admit the doctrine of God's sovereignty in saving and destroying whom he pleases, and the doctrine of unconditional submission follows from one of the first principles of Christianity, as well as from the plain fact of the penitent and submissive malefactor.

2. It appears from the views and exercises of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of repentance before faith is founded in fact. This is asserted by some, but denied by others. They say that faith is before love and repentance towards God. And the reason they give for this opinion is, that no man can either love God, or repent of his sins against him, until he has some good evidence that God loves him, and intends to save him. They say that it is morally impossible for sinners to love God, or repent of sin, while they view him as their enemy, and disposed to punish them for ever; and therefore, they must believe that he intends to save them, before they can exercise either love or repentance towards him. This, however, some suppose is a false and dangerous doctrine; and maintain that every sinner must love God and repent of sin, before he can exercise a cordial, saving faith in Christ. Though we believe that the scriptures speak plainly and decidedly upon this question, yet much has been said, and much is still said, on both sides of it. Passing over all particular texts respecting the priority of faith to repentance, and the priority of repentance to faith, let us have recourse to the infallible decision of fact. As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of one true believer answereth to that of another. Though every true believer is not conscious of the exact order of his gracious exercises in conversion, yet no doubt, the gracious exercises of every believer do, in fact, take place in the same order. Now we know in what order the gracious exercises of the penitent malefactor took place at his conversion. He first of all loved God, and could not bear that he should be reproached, or dishonored. In the next place, he exercised unfeigned repentance, and unreserved submission to God. And in the last place, he exercised a cordial, saving faith in his suffering Redeemer. His love to God was before his repentance and submission; and his repentance and submission were before his faith in Christ. This is the natural order of the first gracious affections of every true believer; and it is difficult to conceive how they can ever take place in a different order. For no man can repent of sin against God, before he loves God; and no man can love Christ for condemning sin, before he hates and repents of sin. Repentance of sin, therefore, must be before faith in Christ. I know that some, in order to avoid this con-

sequence, blend love, repentance and faith all together; but neither reason, nor scripture allows them to do it; and plain fact condemns it. The penitent malefactor did exercise love and repentance towards God, before he exercised faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. It appears from the views and feelings of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of instantaneous regeneration is founded in fact. All who are not Calvinistic in their sentiments, deny this doctrine. They suppose that regeneration is a progressive work of the Spirit, and never effected instantaneously, nor in any short space of time. And they endeavor to explain all that the scripture says upon this subject, agreeably to their opinion. But this instance of the penitent malefactor has given them much trouble, and ingenious and learned labor, to explain away. Bishop Hoadly has, in his discourse concerning the two malefactors, displayed the most ingenuity and plausibility on his side of the question. He supposes that the penitent malefactor had been generally a regular man, except in one instance of theft; that he had been familiarly acquainted with Christ; that he had often heard him preach, and seen him work miracles; and that he was almost a christian before he came to the cross. And he considered his situation there as very singular and extraordinary. He had just come from a human tribunal, where he had been tried and condemned. He was placed by the side of Christ on the cross, while actually suffering for the sins of the world, and involved in that supernatural and awful darkness which overspread the land. But all these plausible things stand completely refuted by the plain facts related concerning the penitent malefactor. He proved himself to have been a stupid, hardened and malignant sinner before he was tried and condemned, and also after he was nailed to the cross, by actually joining with his wicked associate in reviling Jesus whom he knew to be innocent, and who, he knew, called himself the Son of God. But he was in a few hours, or in a few moments after this, instantaneously and savingly changed, and turned from sin to holiness, from the power of Satan unto God, and became a new creature, with new views and new feelings towards God and his stupid associate. And what God did in renewing his heart, he can do in renewing any other sinner's heart. He always acts as instantaneously in taking away the old, and in giving a new heart. For regeneration is a new creation, which is always effected instantaneously.

4. It appears from the conduct of God towards the two malefactors, that he acts as a sovereign in renewing the hearts of men. The doctrine of divine sovereignty, in making one, and not another, the subject of his special grace, is founded in fact. This doctrine, indeed, is very plainly taught in scripture. God declares

that "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth." He takes one and leaves another, without any apparent reason why one of the persons should be taken rather than the other, or why one of them should be left rather than the other. The two malefactors were as much alike as almost any two persons ever were; and we can discover no reason in their characters, conduct, or situation, why one should be made a subject of special grace, and the other left to pine away in his iniquity. They were both sinners, and great sinners, and obstinate sinners. They were both stout hearted before a human tribunal. They were both stout hearted while hanging on the cross, and upon the very brink of hell. They both deserved to perish in their sins for ever. They were both by the side of the divine Redeemer. It was as easy for him to give repentance and salvation to one as to the other, and to both as to one. But he saw fit to awaken, convince and convert one, and raise him to heaven, while he let the other sink by his side into the bottomless pit. He knew the amazing distinction he made between these two equally ill deserving sinners, and the glorious and awful consequences which would eternally flow from it. And in the view of all these consequences, he saw just and weighty reasons for saving one, and destroying the other. We may well conclude, therefore, that there are good reasons in the divine mind, for every act of divine sovereignty in saving those whom he does save, and destroying those whom he does destroy. And these reasons will one day appear, and completely justify the divine conduct in respect to those who are saved and taken to heaven, and those who are driven away in their sins to the regions of everlasting darkness and despair.

5. The conduct of the impenitent malefactor shows that no external means or motives are sufficient to awaken, convince, or convert any stupid sinners. He enjoyed great religious advantages. He was born in Zion; he was circumcised the eighth day; he had opportunity, at seven years old, to attend the passover; he had opportunity to hear the divine law read every Sabbath; and it is very likely that he had heard Christ preach, and seen him work miracles; for he knew that he called himself the Son of God. But none of these means of religion had any good effect upon his mind. His own iniquities corrected him, brought him before a human tribunal, where he was tried, and condemned to die a most painful and reproachful death. After this dreadful sentence was passed upon him, he was led back to the place of confinement, where he had time to meditate and reflect upon death, the dread formalities of a public execution, and the still more awful realities of the eternal world. And if he had any friends, especially pious friends,

they undoubtedly came and conversed with him about the state of his mind, and a preparation for eternity. But all these means and motives left him still stupid and hardened. Soon the solemn day arrived when he was led to Calvary, the place of execution, and fastened to the cross, by the side of the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and there hung from the sixth to the ninth hour in agonies, and heard the melting reproof of his penitent companion in guilt and suffering, and the assurance of the divine Redeemer that he should that day be with him in paradise. But no instructions, no warnings, no reproofs, and no views of eternity, could awaken, or convince, or convert him. He obstinately persisted in stupidity, impenitence and unbelief, till he closed his eyes upon this world, and lifted them up in eternal torments. Here we see it demonstrated that no moral suasion, no human means or exertions, can subdue and soften any hard, impenitent heart. Every impenitent sinner had rather die eternally, than submit unconditionally to God, and embrace the humiliating terms of the gospel.

6. It appears from the fate of the impenitent malefactor, that impenitent sinners have no ground to rely upon the mere mercy of Christ in a dying hour. Many sinners, in a state of health and prosperity, place all their hopes of salvation upon what they shall see, and feel, and experience upon a sick and dying bed. They hope that such a scene will awaken them out of their stupidity, and give them a realizing sense of their danger and guilt. And they hope that when they do realize their lost and perishing condition, they shall cry for mercy. And when they do, in anguish and distress, cry for mercy, they hope that Christ will pity and save them from both sin and destruction. But such views, and feelings, and expectations of careless, delaying sinners are expressive of extreme ignorance, deception, and presumption. It is owing to their ignorance and self deception, that they expect that any external means, or motives, or circumstances will overcome their habits of sin and stupidity. They have no more reason to hope that any thing attending a sick and dying bed, will have more tendency to awaken and convince them of their perishing condition, than the tremendous scene through which the impenitent malefactor passed had to awaken him, from his habitual and obstinate stupidity, and lead him to cry to Christ for mercy, while actually suffering the pains and agonies of a dying hour. He appears to have had no bands in his death, no apprehension of his aggravated guilt, or of the aggravated punishment which awaited him after his day of grace and space of repentance expired. How many impenitent, hardened sinners have since exhibited the same melancholy evidence of the same stu-

pidity in a dying hour! It is daring presumption for any careless, delaying sinners to expect that either sickness, or even the pains of death, will awaken them from their stupidity, till they open their eyes in torment. But supposing that sickness or the near approach of death should alarm their fears, and throw them into the most distressing sense of their guilty and perishing state; what ground have they to expect that Christ will then hear their cries, and pity, and pardon, and save them? He perfectly knew the guilt and danger of the impenitent malefactor, but he manifested no pity or compassion towards him, but suffered him to drop into destruction, under his eye, and by his bleeding side. Christ knew what would be the dreadful condition of the impenitent malefactor, before he was condemned and nailed to the cross, as well as afterwards; and therefore could see no new reasons for saving him then, which he had not seen before. And he saw no sufficient reason for saving him either before or at his death, and of consequence let him die the death he deserved. This instance of Christ's conduct forbids all impenitent sinners to rely upon Christ's mercy, to give them repentance and salvation in a dying hour. It is as consistent with the mercy of Christ to suffer them to die in distress, as in stupidity. And it is very likely that he does suffer many more to die in terror, than in carnal ease and stupidity. It is, therefore, presumption in any sinners to live in the hope of a death-bed repentance.

7. It appears from the conduct and condition of the penitent malefactor, that sinners may be saved at the eleventh or last hour of life, if they really repent and believe in Christ. When sinners are awakened to see their own hearts, and desert of future and endless destruction, they are very apt to despond under a painful apprehension that their day of grace and space of repentance are over, and that it is utterly vain and useless for them to strive to enter the strait gate; the door of mercy being for ever shut. This they gather from what they read concerning sinners' being given up; and from what Christ said in the parable of the ten virgins respecting those who came too late; and from what they read and hear in sermons. But their fears arising from these, or any other considerations, are groundless. There is but one unpardonable sin, and that is not the sin of delay or neglect, but the sin against the Holy Ghost. That sin excepted, all others are pardonable at the latest hour of life, upon the condition of repentance and faith. There is a sense, in which all the non elect are given up; but such a giving up is consistent with their being in a state of probation; and it is as true of them, as it is of any other sinners, that they may be saved, if they repent and believe the gospel, at any moment before they die. The impenitent mal-

efactor was one of the non elect, but his day of grace and space of repentance lasted as long as the day of grace and space of repentance lasted in respect to the penitent malefactor. And we know that his day of grace and of repentance lasted to the eleventh hour. Had his fellow sinner hearkened to his reproof and admonition, and exercised a filial fear of God, and repented, and made the same sincere request to Christ, he would have met with the assurance of pardon and salvation. And there is reason to believe that there have been many individual instances of genuine conversion, at the latest hour of life. We may be assured, however, that it is never too late to repent and believe the gospel, before men breathe their last breath.

8. It appears from the instance of the penitent malefactor, that as soon as the souls of men leave their bodies, they do immediately pass into a state of endless happiness, or a state of endless misery. Christ assured that late penitent that he should that day be with him in paradise; that is, the kingdom of heaven. It is, therefore, an unscriptural, as well as absurd opinion that greatly prevails at this day, that the soul either dies with the body and becomes extinct, or else falls into a state of sleep or total insensibility. Notwithstanding all the figurative representations of death in scripture, which seem to imply either the extinction or insensibility of the soul after it leaves the world; it appears to be true in fact, that it does exist in a state of sensibility and activity. It is a fact that Enoch, Moses and Elias are gone to heaven. It is a fact that the penitent malefactor has gone to heaven. It is a fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are gone to heaven. And it is a fact that Paul desired to die an early death, that he might go the sooner to heaven; which desire would have been absurd, if he expected that death would put an end to the existence of his soul, or throw it into a state of sleep or total insensibility. Now if it be true in fact that the souls of the righteous survive the body, and go to heaven immediately after death, then there is no doubt but that the souls of the wicked when they die, do still exist, and go into a state of endless perdition. And what our Saviour said respecting Dives and Lazarus, affords a strong argument in favor of this conclusion. If he did not mean to represent the state of good and bad men after death, it is impossible to know what he did mean by that most striking parable he ever spake. And if he did mean to represent the state of good and bad men after death, then there is full evidence that they exist in a state of sensibility, and either enjoy the happiness of heaven, or suffer the miseries of the damned.

Finally: It appears from what has been said, that the day of

death is a very solemn and important day. The day when Christ poured out his soul unto death, was a solemn and distressing day. He then drank the bitter cup which his Father put into his hand, and which caused him to exclaim in the language of distress, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The day of death was extremely solemn and interesting to the two poor, guilty creatures, who were crucified and expired with him. That day determined their everlasting destiny. It put a final period to their probationary state, and fixed them both in an unalterable and eternal condition. It was a day of eternal salvation to one, and a day of eternal destruction to the other. The day of death has been equally terrible and interesting to thousands of other poor creatures, who have been sent into eternity under similar solemn circumstances. It was a day of awful solemnity, which the last week determined the eternal destiny of four poor, guilty, miserable creatures.* It appeared so, I presume, to all who beheld the awful scene. But the circumstances of death are never so solemn and interesting, as the eternal consequences which follow from it. And these are essentially the same, let death come at what time and in what form it may. Death is now on his way to arrest every one of us, and how soon he will lay his cold hand upon us, we know not. The day is certainly near to some of us, and cannot be far distant from any of us. We are all condemned to die, and the sentence will soon be executed upon us; for there is no reprieve from death; there is no discharge from that war. It deeply concerns each of us to ask himself, Have I cordially justified God and his law, in my condemnation? Have I condemned myself as the law condemns me? Have I accepted the punishment of mine iniquity? Have I with unreserved submission and a sincere faith turned my eye to Christ, and committed myself to his sovereign mercy? Have I ever felt as that poor, guilty, humble, submissive, penitent, believing creature, felt, to whom Christ said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?" If any of you, my hearers, can sincerely answer these questions in the affirmative to your own satisfaction, you must be, in your own view, prepared for the day of death. But if any of you cannot answer these questions sincerely in the affirmative, you are not, in your own view, prepared to meet the king of terrors. And if you are now, and continue to be impenitent and unbelieving, you must all, like the impenitent criminal on the cross, eventually and eternally perish. But why will ye die? Life, as well as death, is set before you. Choose life, and you shall live.

* The execution of four criminals, near Boston, February, 1819.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE GIVER MORE BLESSED THAN THE RECEIVER.

I HAVE showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. — ACTS, XX. 35.

OUR Saviour went about doing good. He sought opportunities of healing the sick, of relieving the distressed, and of supplying the wants of the needy. He labored, he suffered, and even died for the benefit of mankind. And besides displaying such a bright example of beneficence, he abundantly inculcated this duty in both his public and private discourses. He said at one time, "Give to him that asketh thee." He said at another time, "Give alms of such things as ye have." He said to his apostles in particular, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Being invited to a certain house, he said to the master of it, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." He publicly applauded the poor widow, who cast her two mites into the treasury. He also spake the parable of the good Samaritan, to illustrate the beauty and excellence of a beneficent spirit; to which he subjoined this perpetual precept, "Go and do thou likewise." These sayings of Christ are alone sufficient to justify the exhortation in the text, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." But since we do not find these identical words in any of the Evangelists, we are led to conjecture, that the writer of the Acts refers to a certain expression which Christ often used in free and familiar conversation with his disciples, and which they

were still able to recollect. It is certain, however, that Christ taught the sentiment in the text, whether he ever did or did not expressly say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This expression needs no comment, though it seems to contain a paradox. Many perhaps are ready to think that Christ might have said with more propriety, "It is more blessed to receive than to give." But it will be the business of this discourse to make it appear, that his declaration is strictly true, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." To illustrate this practical truth, and impress it upon every mind, I would observe,

I. There is more real pleasure in giving than in receiving.

Solomon says, "Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts." There is always a pleasure in receiving a gift from the hands of a benefactor; and this pleasure is sometimes greatly heightened by the circumstances of the receiver, or the disposition of the giver. A seasonable gift is acceptable, because it is immediately beneficial to the receiver. A necessary gift is still more acceptable, because it comes in a time of want, and removes some pressing calamity or distress. A great gift excites greater joy, because it not only gratifies the natural desire of property, but throws the mind into a state of pleasing surprise and admiration. Indeed, any gift, whether great or small, never fails to afford a sensible pleasure to the receiver, when it comes as a mark of affection and esteem from the giver. But in these and all other cases, the giver is more blessed than the receiver. There is a higher and purer happiness in rejoicing in the good of others, than in rejoicing in our own good. The receiver rejoices in his own happiness; and let his joy rise ever so high, it still terminates in himself. But the giver has a nobler pleasure, which arises from a nobler source. Instead of rejoicing in his own good, he rejoices in the good of others. As he regards their good in giving, so he enjoys their happiness in receiving; and this is the purest affection and finest feeling of the human heart. It bears the nearest resemblance to the felicity of Him, who delighteth in mercy. Though giving and receiving may flow from the same benevolent spirit, yet the pleasure of giving as far surpasses the pleasure of receiving, as godly joy surpasses godly submission. In receiving gratefully, there is a mixture of submission to our state of dependence; but in giving freely, there is a mixture of joy in being able to give. There is no deduction from the pleasure of giving; but there is a deduction from the pleasure of receiving. The receiver is laid under obligation to the giver; but the giver is laid under no obligation to the receiver. And who can doubt whether it be not more blessed to give, than to receive an obligation? All the circumstances also, which have

been mentioned, as enhancing the pleasure of receiving, equally enhance the pleasure of giving. The giver is gratified when he finds the receiver benefited. The giver is more gratified, when he finds the receiver is relieved from a burden or calamity. The giver feels a satisfaction in proportion to the magnitude and importance of the bounty he bestows. And he who gives to express his love and esteem of the receiver, gratifies the noblest feeling of his heart. In a word, let the giver's and the receiver's feelings be compared, and every one must acknowledge the truth of our Saviour's maxim: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

II. There is more virtue in giving, than in receiving; and therefore the giver is more happy than the receiver.

The receiver may, indeed, exercise virtue in accepting a favor from the hand and heart of his benefactor. He may feel true gratitude to the person who places his own happiness in doing him good. And as such gratitude is a branch of pure benevolence, so it is a virtuous exercise of heart. Hence the receiver may exercise virtue in some proportion to the kindness of the giver. But nevertheless there is more virtue in giving than in receiving. The virtue of the receiver principally consists in a suitable regard to himself; but the virtue of the giver altogether consists in a proper regard to others. And surely there is more virtue in regarding the good of others, than in regarding merely our own good. There are many circumstances which augment the virtue of giving, that do not enhance the virtue of receiving. The poverty, the distress, and even the unworthiness of the receiver, augment the virtue of the giver. The generality of mankind are more disposed to give to the rich than to the poor. This our Saviour remarked and condemned. But it is truly Godlike to bestow favors upon the evil and unthankful. Besides, the virtue of the giver is always equal to his design in giving. A man may give a Bible or some other good book to a poor and vicious person, with a sincere design to promote his spiritual and eternal benefit; but he may have a mean or wicked design in receiving it. And it is generally true, that the giver has much more noble and extensive views than the receiver. This our Saviour intimated in his observation upon the conduct of the poor widow. Her virtue was in proportion to her good intention in giving. She might have had a much greater good in view, than those who cast in of their abundance. The giver of two mites to promote the spread of the gospel and the salvation of sinners may be far more virtuous, than one who gives a thousand dollars for the promotion of a less benevolent and important design. The intention of the giver fixes the degree of his

virtue, whether the design for which he gives be eventually obtained or defeated, or whatever be the consequence of his giving to an individual or to the public.

But there is another thing, which principally magnifies the virtue of the giver, and that is, his self denial. There is more self denial in giving than in receiving. He that gives diminishes his interest, but he that receives increases his property. The true giver never gives with a design or expectation of receiving. This our Saviour says is totally inconsistent with real charity. And the wise man suggests the same idea, when he compares giving to one's casting his bread upon the waters, without any present prospect of ever seeing it again. Real giving, in all cases, implies the parting with so much of our property, as we bestow upon others; and for this reason it is an act of self denial, which is the essence of virtue and the infallible measure of it. Men always have just as much virtue as they have self denial. And those who give, may exercise more or less self denial, according to their wealth or poverty. The poor widow exercised great self denial, because she gave all her living, or the whole of her temporal interest. The Israelites who contributed so largely for the erecting of the tabernacle in the wilderness, probably spared the most of the property which they brought out of Egypt. The Jews, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, spent a large portion of their treasure in repairing the walls of Jerusalem, and in rebuilding and furnishing the Temple. The famous Howard of England, who died a few years ago, expended vast sums for the relief of the poor and distressed in his own, and other countries, besides all his labor, danger and pains in finding out objects of charity. It appears from these and innumerable other instances of liberality, that those who give may exercise very high degrees of self denial, and of course very high degrees of true virtue. But we never read in the Bible, nor any where else, of the self denial of receiving. The receiver has no natural bias, habit, or inclination to counteract; but the giver has all these natural obstacles to overcome. So that the giver stands far superior to the receiver in point of virtue, and consequently in point of blessedness. For virtue and happiness are naturally connected, and bear the intimate relation of cause and effect. Virtue always affords happiness, unless some incidental cause intervenes to prevent it, and therefore where no such cause occurs to obstruct the natural tendency of virtue, the giver is always more blessed than the receiver.

III. God promises to reward the giver, but not the receiver. This remarkable distinction plainly intimates that it is more blessed to give than to receive. God promises to reward men

for doing, but not for receiving acts of kindness and beneficence.

If we search the scripture upon this subject, we shall find more ample promises of both temporal and eternal rewards made to deeds of charity, than even to the duties of devotion. Here, then, let us consider first the temporal and then the eternal rewards promised to beneficent actions.

There are but few things which God has promised to reward men for in this life. He more commonly encourages them to activity and fidelity in his service, by directing them to wait for their recompense in a future state; but he promises to reward acts of munificence with special tokens of his favor in the present life. I will recite a number of his peculiar promises to those who abound in deeds of charity. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth." "A good man showeth favor and lendeth. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his horn shall be exalted with honor." The following sayings were confirmed by common observation in Israel. "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he." "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack." "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor." "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." These are words of Solomon, who was the most critical and judicious observer of the ways of Providence. He discovered the peculiar smiles of Heaven upon those who abounded in acts of kindness and charity to their fellow men. The prophet Isaiah says, "The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand." The alms as well as the prayers of Cornelius were had in divine remembrance, and he was rewarded in his life time with peculiar tokens of the divine favor. Thus God often approves and rewards men for their kind and compassionate deeds in the present life. But this is not all; he means to reward them more openly and fully at the great day of retribution. Hence our Saviour said to the almsgiver, "When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly." He declared that the smallest act of charity to one of his followers, should meet with a future recompense.

"Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." He likewise recommended general benevolence by the same motive. "I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." And on a certain occasion he observed that men would gain more by giving to the poor than to the rich, because they would be more amply recompensed at the resurrection of the just. We are expressly told, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." It appears from the connection of this passage, that it has a sole reference to the future reward of the bountiful giver. There is one passage more, which deserves particular attention, and that is in the twenty-fifth of Matthew, where we have an account of the process of the general judgment, when both rewards and punishments shall be impartially dispensed to all mankind. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." According to this representation of the supreme and final Judge, it seems that no acts of justice, and no acts of worship will be so much approved and rewarded at the last day, as acts of kindness and mercy to those in want and distress. It is, therefore, the dictate of both scripture and reason that it is more blessed to give than to receive; yea, that it is more blessed to give than do any thing else in the power of our hands.

It now remains to improve the subject.

1. If it be more blessed to give than to receive, then we ought to entertain the most exalted ideas of the blessedness of the Supreme Being. He designed from eternity to promote his own felicity, in giving existence and happiness to his creatures. He has been constantly pursuing his original purpose of benevolence, and dispensing his favors through every part of his wide dominions. And as he is the most liberal, so he is the most cheerful giver. He gives, because he delights in giving. He takes infinitely more pleasure in doing good to his creatures than they ever do in doing good to one another. "If ye," says Christ to parents, "know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" God would have every one view him as the most cheerful giver, who en-

joys the highest satisfaction in acts of mercy and beneficence. "Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." God perfectly enjoys all the good he bestows, and is infinitely more blessed in giving than all his creatures in receiving. This must give us the most exalted idea of the blessedness of the kind Parent of the universe, who is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.

2. If it be more blessed to give than to receive, then we may see why charity or beneficence holds the highest rank among all the moral and Christian virtues. It must be allowed that charity, or any species of generosity, is much more admired and applauded by mankind, than justice, veracity, fidelity, or any of the virtues which appear more essential to the order and support of civil society. This, some very ingenious writers have considered as a paradox, and taken very different methods to explain it. One author, in particular, makes a distinction between the primary and secondary virtues. He represents justice, veracity, and all the primary virtues, as resulting from the nature of things, and of course binding upon all mankind; but he considers charity, generosity, and all the secondary virtues, as arising from a different source, being mere voluntary actions, which men are under no moral obligation to perform. And he supposes it is for this reason alone, that the secondary virtues of charity, liberality, and beneficence, are so much more admired and applauded, than justice, veracity, or any other primary virtues. But this opinion appears to have no solid foundation. Men are under the same moral obligation to be generous as to be just, and are as free and voluntary in doing justice, as in showing mercy. This leads us to look for some other reason for the universal opinion, that charity is a more amiable virtue, than even justice or veracity. And the subject we have been considering suggests the true reason of this opinion. It is because charity, or beneficence, has more true benevolence or moral excellence in it, than any of the primary virtues. There is more pure, disinterested love displayed in giving a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, than in speaking the truth, or in doing any act of mere justice. David discovered more true benevolence and virtue, in his generosity to Mephibosheth, the poor, feeble son of Jonathan, than in any of his most splendid actions in the field of battle. Those who are the most illustrious examples of charity and beneficence, justly deserve to have the highest place in the love, esteem, and gratitude of mankind, and they very seldom fail of receiving this

due reward of their superior virtue. Job's generosity commanded the highest respect and applause of all who saw and felt the effects of his charity and beneficence. When the young men saw him, they hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up. When the ear heard him, then it blessed him, and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him; because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; and because he was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Charity, liberality, and beneficence are the noblest traits in the moral and Christian character, and will continue to command the highest respect of mankind, as long as they retain their moral discernment of moral excellence.

3. If it be more blessed to give than to receive, then it is a great and peculiar favor to be made rich. Poverty is a real calamity in itself, and draws after it a long train of natural evils. It not only deprives men of the power and pleasure of giving, but subjects them to the disagreeable necessity of receiving alms. This calamity, in a greater or less degree, prevails through the world. There are many more in a state of poverty, than in a state of mediocrity; and many more in a state of mediocrity, than in a state of wealth and affluence. It is only a few families in any place or in any nation, who are comparatively rich; and among these, there are many individuals, who, by misconduct or misfortune, are reduced to the most reproachful and painful poverty. God commonly dispenses wealth with a sparing hand, and of course highly distinguishes as well as favors those upon whom he lavishes the bounties of providence. Accordingly we find that he has given wealth as a peculiar token of his favor to his peculiar friends. He made Abraham, Job, and the patriarchs rich; and promised to bestow the same mark of his favor upon his ancient covenant people, so long as they continued dutiful and obedient. So that it became a proverb in Israel: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." Wealth ought to be esteemed a peculiar favor, not merely as the source of private and personal benefit, but as a talent to be employed to the glory of God, and to the good of mankind. What benevolent man would not wish to be able to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the distressed, and promote every charitable and beneficent design? Who, that has the spirit of a man or of a christian, would not esteem it an honor and a privilege to be the steward of God, to dispense the blessings of his goodness to his indigent creatures? How happy was Job in doing good to the poor, the fatherless, and the widows! And how much happier still was Joseph in supplying the wants of millions,

and saving whole nations from the fatal effects of famine! All men of opulence have abundant reason to be thankful, that God has given them the power of gratifying their own benevolent feelings, in promoting the happiness, and diminishing the miseries of the objects of charity.

4. If it be more blessed to give than to receive, then we may learn what ought to be the supreme and governing motive of men, in pursuing their secular concerns, and seeking to increase their worldly interest. The great mass of mankind are extremely attached to the world, and are willing to labor, and toil, and run every hazard to accumulate property, and acquire a large portion of the good things of life. But they are too generally prompted to gain the world from mean and mercenary motives. Some labor to be rich from the motive of avarice, or a hoarding disposition; some labor to be rich from the motive of ambition, or a desire of rising to honor and influence; but many more, perhaps, are eager to enlarge their fortunes, for the sake of displaying grandeur, and gratifying the evil propensities of their carnal hearts. They wish to lay up goods for many years, that they may fare sumptuously every day, and live a life of indolence and dissipation. All these are men of the world, who choose their portion in this life, and who labor to be rich from selfish and forbidden motives. But there still remains one virtuous and laudable motive, which ought to induce all men to be laborious and industrious in getting the world, and increasing their earthly treasures. It is the motive of pure, disinterested benevolence, or an ardent desire to do good, and communicate of their abundance to those whom Providence has thrown into a state of poverty and distress. This is the noble motive to be active and industrious in gaining the world, which governed the conduct of the apostle Paul; and which ought to govern the conduct of all other ministers, and of all other men, in their worldly pursuits. "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel," says he to the elders of Ephesus. "Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." There is little danger of man's being too industrious and laborious to become rich, from the benevolent motive of ministering to the wants and necessities of the poor, and of promoting the cause and interest of Christ. The farmer and mechanic ought to labor with their hands, the soldier and seaman ought to jeopard their lives, and all classes of men ought to use every lawful method to enlarge their fortunes, that they may be more

and more able to do deeds of charity and benevolence. It is the will of God that every one should "labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." This is the virtuous and laudable motive which ought above all to govern men, in all their desires and exertions to abound in wealth and affluence.

5. If it be more blessed to give than to receive, then none have any reason to think that they are real christians, who have never experienced this peculiar blessedness. All who have been partakers of the divine nature, have felt and expressed the spirit of beneficence, and enjoyed the pure pleasure of doing good. This is an infallible criterion, by which all ought to try and determine their spiritual state.

The apostle Paul, after describing the marks of apostacy, in the sixth of Hebrews, represents acts of beneficence as good evidence of Christian sincerity. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labor of love which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." The apostle James will not allow any person to have the least spark of grace, who is destitute of kindness and compassion to the objects of charity. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction," &c. The benevolent apostle John makes beneficence essential to the Christian character, without which no person has any ground to view himself as possessed of the love of God. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him?" "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" By this same criterion our Saviour tried the amiable young man in the gospel, and proved him to be entirely destitute of grace, notwithstanding his high pretensions to piety. "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about,

and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Beneficence is the most infallible rule, by which the professors of religion ought to try their own sincerity, and by which others ought to regulate their opinion of their piety. This method of trial is founded on the well known principle, that a good tree will yield good fruit, and a pure fountain will send forth pure streams, and a benevolent heart will produce beneficent actions. If those who profess to be better than others, would do more than others in acts of kindness and charity, they would exhibit that evidence of the reality, the beauty, and the importance of the Christian religion, which none of the ungodly world can gainsay or resist.

6. If it be more blessed to give than to receive, then the covetous and parsimonious defeat their own design, and take the direct method to diminish rather than to increase their temporal interest. There is not a few among men of easy and affluent circumstances, who endeavor to increase their fortunes and lay up goods for many years, not only by shutting their eyes and ears and hearts and hands against the objects of charity, but even by defrauding and oppressing the poor and necessitous. This course of conduct is extremely unwise, and may prove as injurious to themselves as it is unkind and unjust to others. If they would duly consult the dictates of their own reason and observation, and, especially, what God has said upon this subject, they would be fully convinced, that this their way is their folly; which directly tends to deprive them of the good they are seeking after, and to bring upon them the evil which they so greatly dread and labor to avoid. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it." "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want." "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat; making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works." It is easy for God to blast the hopes and destroy the interests of such selfish, parsimonious, and hard hearted men, and they have great reason to

fear, that, while they are shutting up their bowels of compassion from the proper objects of compassion, God will either take away the property which he has given them, or turn it into a curse both to themselves and their posterity.

5. If it be more blessed to give than to receive, then those who are able to give, should esteem it a favor when Providence presents them with opportunities of giving. Our Lord told his disciples, "Ye have the poor always with you." God has wisely ordained, that there should always be objects of charity in this world, and fair opportunities of trying the hearts of the selfish, and of gratifying the hearts of the pious and beneficent. This is the reason God gave to his own peculiar people, why there should be always some poor and needy ones among them, and why they should cheerfully contribute to their comfort and relief. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land." The rich and the affluent have always had opportunities of giving, but they were never more highly favored with such opportunities, than at the present day. The great and interesting revolutions among both Christian and heathen nations, have opened a wide door for the ample display of general benevolence and private charity. There never have been in any age of Christianity, perhaps, so many benevolent designs formed, to diffuse temporal and spiritual blessings among mankind, as at the present time. The Missionary Societies, the Tract Societies, the Bible Societies, the Theological Societies, and the various species of humane Societies, have greatly multiplied within these very few years. All these societies not only present opportunities of doing good, but loudly call upon all classes of men to contribute, in some mode or other, to the temporal and spiritual benefit of those who are suffering by a famine of bread, or a famine of knowledge, or a famine of hear-

ing the word of the Lord. Let the rich, and all who enjoy a competency of the good things of life, improve these precious opportunities of giving from the purest motives and for the noblest ends. Let them every where contribute according to their abilities, for the comfort and relief of the poor, for the private and public instruction of youth, for the maintenance of ministers at home, for the support of missionaries abroad, and for the propagation of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Let them cheerfully and unanimously enter into the wide field of benevolence and charity, which is now open before them. Let them not think nor say, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest; but lift up their eyes and look on the fields, which are white already to harvest. The time is come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. The time is come when christians of all denominations are praying for the prosperity of Zion, and expending their property for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. If you either refuse or neglect to open your hearts and your hands in aid to this most benevolent design of saving precious and immortal souls from endless misery, you will incur the highest displeasure of your final Judge. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" We do, therefore, agreeably to the apostle's directions, "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." A mere pang of compassion, or a solitary act of beneficence, will not fulfil your Christian obligations, nor establish your Christian characters, nor afford you the blessedness of the bountiful giver. You must devise and pursue liberal things, and keep your hearts and hands continually open to deeds of charity. You must, in a word, live up to the spirit of our Saviour's command to all his followers: "Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide for yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not."

SERMON XXXIV.

THE EXHIBITION OF CHRIST TRIES THE HUMAN HEART.

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. — Luke, ii. 34, 35.

Though Christ was born in a low and obscure condition, yet never, perhaps, did two parents in Israel perform the rite of dedication with such emotions of heart, as Joseph and Mary felt, when they appeared in the temple, and publicly consecrated to God their child, their Saviour, and their Sovereign. At the same time, good old Simeon came in, and raised the tide of their affections. After praising God for the long expected Messiah, and for the opportunity of seeing the young Redeemer, he addressed the mother of our Lord in the words I have read. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." It appears from this declaration, which was made under a divine impulse, that it was the design of God, in exhibiting the Son of his love before his people Israel, to try their hearts and fix their final state. And we must suppose that he means to answer the same important purpose, from age to age, by exhibiting the character and conduct of the blessed Saviour before the minds of men, through the medium of the gospel. This, therefore, is the truth to be illustrated in the present discourse:

That God exhibits Christ before the minds of men, in order to try their hearts and fix their future state.

This subject naturally divides itself into two branches, which require a distinct consideration.

I. Let us consider, that God exhibits Christ before the minds of men, in order to try their hearts.

1. The truth of this observation appears from what the prophets foretold concerning the feelings and conduct of men towards the Messiah, when he should make his appearance in the flesh, and perform his mediatorial work among them. David predicted that he would alarm the fears, and awaken the enmity and opposition of the world against him. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." After this, he foretold the language and feelings of Christ under the cruel hands of his implacable enemies. In the name of the suffering Saviour, he said, "Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." "The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet." "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." This was a plain prediction of the feelings and conduct of the crucifiers of Christ, who were highly incensed against him, on account of the doctrines which he taught, and the claims which he made to equality with the Father. Isaiah also foretold the contempt and cruelty with which Christ would be treated, in the days of his humanity. "He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised, and we esteemed him not. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." The prophets were inspired to foretell these effects of Christ's appearance in the flesh, because God intended, by bringing him into the world, to try the hearts of men, and draw forth those feelings which they really possessed, but were unwilling to acknowledge.

2. It appears from the history of Christ, that he fulfilled the predictions which went before concerning him, and tried the hearts of all, who either heard him preach, or saw his miracles,

or were any way acquainted with him. He was a sign universally spoken against. Herod and all Jerusalem were alarmed at the news of his birth, and began to speak and act against him, even before they saw him. When he appeared as a preacher, he tried the hearts of all who attended his public or private discourses. Some said, he spake as never man spake; but others said he deceived the people. Some heard him gladly; but others heard him with disgust and indignation. Some admired his miracles; but others despised and blasphemed them. Some said God was with him; but others said he was assisted by Satan. He tried multitudes by his crucifixion, as well as by his miracles and preaching. Then, like a sword, he pierced the heart of his mother, and of his peculiar friends and followers. Then he tried the hearts of the two malefactors, who suffered and died by his side. Then he tried the hearts of his murderers, and made it appear that they were more cruel than the savage beasts of prey. Then he tried the hearts of all the spectators of that solemn scene, who were very differently affected by the awful spectacle of his death. He constrained them all to express their real feelings, on that extraordinary occasion. While some railed and some mocked, the centurion glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts, and returned. Christ was like a fuller's soap, and a refiner's fire. He tried the hearts of thousands, both while he lived and when he died. He was always saying, or doing something, which had a direct tendency to try the hearts of all his friends and foes.

3. The exhibition of Christ after his death, through the medium of the gospel, tried the hearts of the whole Jewish nation. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, and the apostles were properly prepared to exhibit a crucified Saviour, his character impressed the minds and tried the hearts of all who heard them preach. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were universally affected. While thousands believed and rejoiced, fear came upon every soul who despised and rejected the offers of mercy in the name of Christ. While some rose and some fell, while some were enlightened and some blinded, while some praised and some blasphemed the divine Redeemer, every heart in Jerusalem was tried. After this, the gospel was carried to Samaria, and to all parts of Judea, where it produced the same different effects which it had produced in Jerusalem. It tried the hearts of believers and unbelievers, and completely prepared the nation in general to be cut off and dispersed through the world. The exhibition of Christ, by the gospel, disclosed the secrets of their hearts, demonstrated their blindness, stupidity,

and unbelief; which justified God in taking the gospel from them, and sending it to other nations who would give it a better reception. And when the apostles carried the gospel to other nations, and exhibited the character of Christ before them, he was precious to those who believed; but to those who disbelieved, he was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. So that he was for the falling and rising of many among the Gentiles, as well as among the Jews.

4. Ever since the days of the apostles, the character of Christ displayed in the gospel, has tried the hearts of the whole Christian world. Though many nations and kingdoms have been gospelized, yet only a few individuals have sincerely embraced the Saviour. Myriads and myriads of mankind, in the course of near two thousand years, have been invited to believe in Christ, but yet have despised him, and practically judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. The hearts of all these have been tried, and proved to be totally corrupt, by exhibiting Christ crucified before their eyes. How many have risen by looking to Christ? and how many have fallen by looking from him? But none have believed nor disbelieved, and none have risen nor fallen, differently from what God intended, by the exhibition of Christ through the gospel.

5. It appears from the very character of Christ, that he cannot be exhibited to the minds of men without trying their hearts. His character, above all others, is adapted to draw forth the feelings of the human heart. It is not only supremely excellent, but infinitely interesting to all intelligent beings, and especially to mankind. None of the human race can view it with indifference. The child that was born in Bethlehem, that was consecrated to God in the temple, that came to manhood in Nazareth, that preached in Judea, that died without the gates of Jerusalem, that arose from the dead, and ascended up to heaven, that very same person was the mighty God, the Prince of peace, the Lord of glory, the Governor of the universe, and the supreme Judge of all intelligent and accountable creatures. Every human heart must be for, or against this great and illustrious personage. Wherever he is exhibited in all his excellences, offices, and designs, he must necessarily try the hearts of men in some very important respects.

And, first, in regard to God. In Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Though united with humanity, he necessarily possesses and displays all the perfections of his Father. This justified him in saying to his disciples, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." Wherever Christ is exhibited, he reveals the

character and counsels of God. "The Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him." God, therefore, by exhibiting Christ in the gospel, tries the hearts of men in respect to himself. He certainly made it appear that the Jews were his enemies, by the instrumentality of Christ. They had long professed to be the friends of God, and to desire the coming of the promised Messiah; but when he came, and displayed his Father's character, they fully manifested the enmity of their hearts towards both him and his Father. When he preached at Nazareth, and taught the sovereignty of God in the dispensation of his favors, they were extremely exasperated. And whenever he brought the divine character into view, whether in his public or private discourses, it never failed to excite their bitter reproach and resentment. Hence he plainly told them, "If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "And because I tell you the truth ye believe me not." "He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil." Upon their saying this, our Saviour turned to his apostles, and forewarned them of the treatment which they should receive from those to whom they should preach the gospel of God. "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin: He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." If God had never set up his Son as a sign to be spoken against and opposed, it never would have appeared, in fact, that all men have by nature, a mortal enmity against God, and would, if possible, actually destroy his existence. But by the crucifixion of the holy child Jesus, who was the Lord of glory, men's mortal enmity to God has been clearly revealed, and will continue to be revealed, wherever the gospel is preached and the character of Christ is exhibited. His character will always display the character of God, and of consequence, draw forth the native malignity of mankind towards the supreme Sovereign of the universe.

In the second place, the exhibition of Christ necessarily discovers the secrets of men's hearts towards themselves, as well as towards God. Christ, in the course of his life, and more es-

pecially at his death, laid open the guilt and ill desert of sinners. He told them in plain terms, that they were serpents, and a generation of vipers, who deserved the damnation of hell; and he confirmed these declarations, by his sufferings and death on the cross. Before he appeared on earth, the false prophets and blind guides had daubed with untempered mortar, and led sinners to entertain a high opinion of the purity of their hearts. But he exposed their inward turpitude, selfishness, and hypocrisy; which, in words, they denied and resented, but in conduct, clearly expressed. The life of Christ condemned the lives of sinners, the preaching of Christ condemned the hearts of sinners, and the death of Christ demonstrated that they deserved the wrath of God both in this life and in that which is to come. And the gospel, which contains the history of the character, conduct, and sufferings of Christ for this rebellious world, is a mirror in which all may discover their moral depravity and just desert of eternal destruction. God means, by exhibiting Christ through the gospel, to undeceive men with respect to themselves, and make them sensible of their guilty and wretched condition.

Besides, thirdly, the exhibition of Christ as a mediator, discovers men's feelings in regard to the terms of salvation. God has made love to the person and character of Christ, an indispensable condition of granting pardon to sinners. He declares wherever he sends the gospel, that whosoever believeth shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not shall be damned. And he says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maran-atha." By thus exhibiting Christ as the sole foundation of forgiveness, he tries the hearts of sinners respecting their willingness to be saved. They naturally imagine that they are very willing to accept of salvation; but when the true character of Christ is displayed, and love to his character is proposed as the term of divine acceptance, then the secrets of their hearts are disclosed, and they find that they would rather die eternally, than submit to that condition. Our Lord told sinners in his day, that they would not come unto him that they might have life. And he illustrated this by several striking parables, especially by the parable of the marriage feast, in which he represented those that were invited, as refusing to attend; and by the parable of the vineyard, in which he represented the husbandmen, as defrauding the owner, abusing his servants, and slaying his Son. The same spirit of opposition to the terms of the gospel still reigns in the hearts of sinners. So that God still tries, and will continue to try their hearts, by exhibiting Christ as the way, the truth, and the life, and the only name given under heaven through which they can find favor in his sight.

The next thing proposed is,

II. To show that God tries the hearts of men through the medium of Christ, in order to fix their future and final state. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many." God intends to make men happy or miserable for ever, according to the feelings of their hearts towards the Son of his love. This Christ expressly and abundantly taught, in the course of his ministry. He said, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Indeed the whole New Testament represents God as determining to fix the eternal condition of all men under the gospel, according to their receiving or rejecting the Saviour whom he has provided. And we find this important truth confirmed by many plain and solemn facts. God fixed the final state of the inhabitants of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, according to their internal feelings and external conduct towards Christ. They finally fell, by opposing and rejecting his holy child Jesus. God fixed the final state of the Jewish nation according to their treatment of Christ. It was for their violent opposition to Jesus of Nazareth, and their avowed unbelief, that he cut them off, and cast them out of his vineyard. Christ was verily set for the fall of the Jews, and the rising of the Gentiles. And God is now exhibiting Christ before men, in order to fix their eternal state. He means to save, or destroy them, accordingly as they receive, or reject him who died for them. Their views and feelings respecting Christ in time, are to determine what shall be their views and feelings to all eternity.

And there appears to be a propriety in God's treating men according to their love, or hatred of Christ, because their feelings towards Christ afford a proper criterion of their true characters. If they love Christ, they love God; but if they hate Christ, they hate God. If they love Christ, they love the good of the universe; but if they hate Christ, they are enemies to all good. The character of Christ is the most infallible test of all human characters. And by fixing the final state of all who enjoy the gospel, according to their love, or hatred of Christ, God will justify his conduct before the eyes of all intelligent beings. Saints and angels will approve of his finally rejecting those who hated Christ without a cause; and the finally miserable themselves will be constrained to approve of his saving those, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since it is God's design in exhibiting Christ before men, to try their hearts and prepare them for their final state, it becomes the ministers of the gospel to make Christ the main subject of their preaching. His character, in all its branches, runs through the whole of divine revelation, and comprises the essence of the gospel. It is impossible to preach the gospel, in all its weight and importance, without bringing Christ into view, as the only name given under heaven among men whereby they can be saved. This was the constant practice of the apostles, who were able and faithful ministers of the New Testament. They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ on every occasion. Yea, they determined to know nothing among their hearers, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Accordingly we find, that their preaching had a most powerful effect. By preaching Christ, Peter converted three thousand souls at one time. By preaching Christ, Stephen cut his hearers to the heart. And by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, Paul approved himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and converted myriads among both Jews and Gentiles. If ministers mean to be faithful to God and to the souls of men, they must follow the example of the apostles, and make Christ the primary subject of their preaching. This will make their discourses reach the hearts and consciences of their hearers, and cause the most stubborn sinners to tremble, and cry out, in anxiety and distress, What must we do to be saved? And this will make them become unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

2. If it be God's design in exhibiting Christ before men, to try their hearts and prepare them for their final state, then it is much to be desired, that the gospel should be preached to all nations. There is no ground to hope, that any of the heathen will be saved, while they remain totally ignorant of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. It does not appear from the past dispensations of grace, that God ever sends his Spirit where he does not send his gospel. Though the apostle declares, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him;" yet he demands, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" The whole tenor of scripture plainly intimates, that all who are living in Pagan darkness, are strangers to the covenants of promise, and without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. It is, therefore, as much to be desired, that these guilty and miserable creatures

should have the gospel preached to them, as that they should escape the wrath to come, and secure the salvation of their souls. If the character of Christ were exhibited to them, they would have an opportunity of exercising that faith, without which it is impossible to please God and obtain eternal life. For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Though God intends to give unto his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; yet there is no ground to expect this desirable event, until the way is prepared by the universal spread of the gospel. If christians did but duly realize, that it is only in Christ, that God means to reconcile the world to himself, they would be more zealously engaged to send the gospel of his grace into all the dark corners of the earth. Were there to be a general diffusion of gospel light through the heathen world, there is abundant reason to hope that God would make the knowledge of Christ a savor of life unto life to those who are perishing for the lack of vision. It becomes all the friends of Zion to pray that God would make known his way upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. For he has assured them, that their prayers and exertions are necessary to bring about this great and glorious event.

3. If God means to try the hearts of men, and prepare them for their final state through the medium of the gospel, then he has an important purpose to answer, by sending it where he knows it will be rejected. Though he clearly foresaw and predicted that the inhabitants of Judea would generally shut their eyes, and stop their ears, and harden their hearts, under the preaching of the gospel, yet he commanded the apostles to begin their ministry at Jerusalem, and make the first offer of salvation to the Jews. And when the gospel had tried their hearts and produced the effect foretold, Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." God meant to give his degenerate people a fair opportunity to see and hate both him and his Son, and in that way to ripen themselves for their final ruin. And he now puts the same price into the hands of those, who, he knows, will have no heart to improve it. The gospel is no less adapted to fit men for eternal misery, than for eternal happiness. This alarming truth the apostle Paul frequently exhibited in the most plain and striking light; and appealed to the consciences of men, whether God may not make the gospel a medium of destruction to some, as well as a medium of salvation to others. "What if God, willing to show his wrath and make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruc-

tion: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" And again he asks, "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." It seems to have given him great encouragement to preach the gospel, to be assured that it should be the means of preparing both saints and sinners for their final state. "Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other, the savor of life unto life." The word of God never returns to him void, but always accomplishes his purpose of saving or destroying those to whom he sends it.

4. If the exhibition of Christ be designed to form men for their future and eternal state, then they are in a very solemn situation while they are hearing the gospel. It is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two edged sword. It will infallibly penetrate and try their hearts, and leave impressions there which never can be eradicated. Though they may come to the house of God for mere amusement, and hear the gospel with as much levity and indifference as if they knew it were a cunningly devised fable, which could have no influence upon their future state, yet they will sooner or later feel the evil effects of their criminal stupidity and presumption. God told Ezekiel that his vain and contemptuous hearers should reap the bitter fruits of their sin and folly, in despising his solemn messages. "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." And Christ forewarned his unbelieving hearers that his word would not be lost upon them, but prove the ground of their final condemnation. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day." Whenever sinners come within the walls of the sanctuary, they are under a moral necessity of embracing the gospel, or of rejecting the counsel of God against themselves; which is the most critical and interesting situation they can possibly be in, this side of eternity.

5. If the gospel tries the hearts and forms the characters of those who hear it, then sinners may easily and insensibly fit themselves for destruction. Many seem to think that the gospel will do them no harm unless they openly and violently oppose

it. They flatter themselves, if they never say any thing against it by way of complaint or contempt; but, on the other hand, treat it with respect, acknowledge it to be divine, and hear it with decency; they are in the fair way to salvation. They verily believe that the Jews were highly criminal for their violent opposition to Christ, and the doctrines he taught; and they view all open infidels and scoffers as walking in the same broad road to destruction. But they mean to shun such shocking examples, and pursue a more wise and prudent course as long as they live. They intend to sit and hear the gospel with as much patience as possible, and never suffer their hard thoughts and inward enmity to break out into open violence to Christ, or to those who preach in his name. And so long as they constantly and seriously hear the gospel, they fondly hope it will prove a saving benefit to them. But this is a gross and dangerous delusion. Internal opposition to Christ is as fatal to the soul as external, and will as infallibly destroy it. How many serious, and apparently well disposed persons, sit under the gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, with secret opposition to Christ, and to the way of salvation through his mediation and atonement! They see no form nor comeliness in him, wherefore they should desire him; but heartily hate his person, his doctrines, and his terms of mercy, which is a silent and insensible way to destruction. So long as sinners thus sit under gospel preaching, and hear and hate, hear and hate, hear and hate, they are constantly preparing, whether they realize it or not, to unite in the feelings, and share in the torments, of the incorrigible enemies of God, who shall lie down in everlasting sorrow.

6. We learn from what has been said in this discourse, that all who hear the gospel may know, before they leave the world, what will be their future and final state. God has given them a glorious and infallible sign. He has clearly exhibited the great and amiable character of the divine Redeemer, and told them, if they look at it and love it, they shall live; but if they look at it and hate it, they shall die. They have only to determine how they have felt or do feel in view of the Saviour, and draw the inference justly, in order to know with certainty whether they are friends or enemies to God, and prepared to enjoy his favor or feel his displeasure for ever. If they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, they may assure themselves that because he lives they shall live; but if they remain conscious of hating the Lord Jesus Christ, they may assure themselves that because he lives, they must die. His character will be for ever exhibited to the view of all intelligent creatures; and those who view it with complacence and delight must be perfectly blessed; but those who view it with directly the opposite feelings, must be completely and for ever miserable.

SERMON XXXV.

GOD LOVES THOSE THAT LOVE HIM.

I Love them that love me. — Proverbs, viii. 17.

This is the language of divine wisdom, speaking throughout this chapter. It is not, however, very easy to determine whether divine wisdom is here to be taken in a figurative, or literal sense. Some suppose that Solomon uses the term wisdom here, and in other parts of this book, to denote true religion, or that wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. Some suppose that the wisdom speaking in the text, is Jesus Christ, who is called the Wisdom of God. But some are more inclined to think that wisdom is here personified, and denotes God himself, who is often represented by one of his essential attributes, as the Almighty, Holy One, &c. These several expositions of wisdom very nearly coincide, so that we cannot deviate from truth, by adopting either of them, though we may not exactly hit the precise meaning of the sacred writer. But I choose to consider God as speaking in the text, and saying, "I love them that love me." The plain and obvious import of this declaration is,

That God loves none but such as first love him.

To illustrate this subject, I shall,

I. Show what kind of love God exercises towards them who love him.

II. Consider what is implied in men's loving God.

III. Inquire why God loves only such as first love him.

I. I am to show what kind of love God bears towards them who love him.

There is the love of benevolence, and the love of complacence. These two kinds of love are of the same nature, but distinguished by the objects upon which they terminate. The love of benevolence terminates upon percipient being, and extends to all sensitive natures, whether rational or irrational, whether they have a good, or bad, or no moral character. God desires and regards the good of all his creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest insect. His benevolence is bounded by nothing but an incapacity to enjoy happiness and suffer pain. He is good to the evil and to the unthankful; yea, he is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Every creature has a share in his benevolent affections and his benevolent exertions, in exact proportion to his worth and importance in the scale of being. He so loved the whole wicked world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. His love of benevolence extends to sinners, as well as to saints; to the worst, as well as to the best of mankind. But his love of complacence is wholly confined to moral beings, who are possessed of moral excellence. Nothing but virtue, or goodness, or real holiness is the object of his complacence. He loves holiness in himself, and wherever he finds it in any of his creatures. He sees it in all those who love him, and therefore he loves them, not only with benevolence, but with complacence. When he says in the text, "I love them that love me," he means to declare that he feels that complacency towards those who love him, which he does not feel towards those who hate him. He loves those who hate him, with the love of benevolence, but not with the love of complacence. It is, therefore, the peculiar love of complacence, which God bears to them, and to them only that love him.

II. Let us consider what is implied in men's loving God.

1. This implies some true knowledge of his moral character. There is reason to fear that many who live under the light of the gospel, and believe the existence of God, yet have no just conceptions of his nature and moral attributes. Though they have some right apprehensions of his self existence, independence, almighty power, and all his natural perfections, yet they are ready to imagine that he is altogether such an one as themselves, in his views and feelings. But this is a great and dangerous mistake. God is love. He formed all his purposes from eternity, under the influence of pure, disinterested benevolence, and is immutably determined to govern all events, and to dispose of all his creatures, so as to promote the highest holiness and happiness of them that love him. It is impossible to exercise true love to God, without some just conceptions

of his perfect benevolence, which comprises all his holiness, justice, mercy, and every other moral excellence. It is true, men may form and love a false character of God; but in that case, it is not the true God they love, but an object infinitely different. It is so far from being virtuous to love a false character of God, that it is highly criminal. Multitudes loved Christ, when he was here upon earth, while they were ignorant of his true character; but he never approved of their love; nay, he absolutely condemned it, as selfish and sinful. If men love a false character of God, their love is as really criminal as their hatred. The reason is, such love and hatred proceed from precisely the same source; that is, selfishness. The love of the Israelites at the Red Sea, was as really criminal as their murmurs and complaints in the wilderness. They loved God at first, because they thought he loved them; and afterwards they murmured and complained, because they thought he did not love them, but intended to destroy them. Hence it appears that there can be no true love to God, but what is founded on the true knowledge of God, and exercised towards his true character. But though true love to God implies a true knowledge of his character, yet a true knowledge of his character does not imply a true love to him; because men may hate his true, as well as his false character. Christ says to the Jews, "Ye have both seen, and hated both me and my Father." This leads me to observe,

2. That true love to God implies esteem, as well as knowledge. True love cannot exist without esteem. One person may, indeed, love another without esteem; but that love can have no virtue in it. Esteem always arises from a conviction of moral excellence in the person or being esteemed. All men have a moral discernment of moral objects. Sinners are capable of discerning moral excellence in holiness; and when they discern it, they are constrained, in spite of their hearts, to esteem it. Job was a perfect and upright man; and accordingly we are told that the eye that saw him, and the ear that heard him, blessed him; that is, he commanded the universal esteem of both saints and sinners. So, when men have a true knowledge of God, they are constrained to esteem him, as the greatest and best of beings. Sinners cannot contemplate the infinite greatness and goodness of God, without discerning his infinite worthiness to be loved. Such a sense of his infinite worthiness is necessarily implied in loving him supremely; for supreme love must be founded on supreme esteem. Moses loved God supremely, and his supreme affection was founded upon his supreme esteem of the divine character. This he expresses in his song of praise, upon the overthrow of Pharaoh. "Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glo-

rious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!" Men must have that esteem of God which arises from a sensible conviction of his supreme worthiness, before they can love him with a sincere and supreme affection. But since they may have a true knowledge and high esteem of God, without loving him sincerely, it is necessary to add,

3. That their loving God truly, implies a supreme complacence in his moral character. True love to God essentially consists in being pleased that he is what he is. In the exercise of true love to any object, there is a pleasure taken in the object itself. Men may have a true knowledge of the divine character, and a real esteem of it, while they see nothing in it which gives them pleasure, but perfect pain. This pain is owing to their hatred of that divine excellence, which they feel they ought to love. But when they truly love God, they take pleasure in every part of his moral character. They love his holiness, justice and sovereignty, as well as his goodness, mercy and grace. David's love to God was a complacence in his moral beauty and excellence. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord." Jeremiah expressed the same satisfaction in God, when he said, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." The supreme moral excellence of the divine character is the primary object of the love of complacence. The mere natural perfections of the Deity, aside from his moral, cannot be the object of complacential love, but the reverse,—the object of terror and aversion. It is the pure benevolence of God, which spreads a moral beauty over all his natural perfections, and renders them pleasing and lovely to every pious heart. Men's loving God with all the heart, with all the mind, and with all the strength, always implies a complacence in his moral character, without regard to any personal interest in his favor. It is not a mercenary, or selfish affection, but pure and disinterested. It is feeling towards God, just as he feels towards them that love him. It is giving him the supreme affection of the heart, from a clear knowledge and full conviction of his infinite moral excellence and glory.

We are now to inquire,

III. Why God loves only such as first love him. He says, "I love them that love me;" which plainly supposes that he has not the same affection towards those of an opposite character. It appears from the whole current of scripture, that God takes no complacence in unrenewed sinners, who are entirely destitute of true love to his moral perfections. The apostle says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in

unrighteousness." Our Saviour declares, "He that believeth not is condemned already," and "the wrath of God abideth on him." We read, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." And God himself expresses his feelings towards his enemies, in the most pointed language, in the thirty-second of Deuteronomy. "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." The Bible is full of threatenings against sinners, which clearly express divine displeasure, and not divine love. It is true, God feels and expresses benevolence towards all mankind; but this is consistent with the highest displeasure against those that hate him. Nor will his displeasure cease, until they cease to be his enemies, and become his friends. But here some may be ready to ask, Why does he not love them, before they first love him?

The direct answer to this question is, that before they first love him, they are not lovely. Their hearts are full of evil, and entirely opposed to all that is good. They are wholly under the dominion of selfishness, which is total enmity to all holiness. In them, that is, in their hearts, there dwelleth no good thing. They have not one moral quality, which is truly virtuous and amiable. The corruption of their hearts defiles all their natural powers and faculties, and renders them really odious and detestable. Hence says the apostle, "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." As there is nothing amiable in the natural perfections of God, aside from his holiness, so there is nothing amiable in the intellectual powers of men, aside from their benevolent and holy affections. While they have not the love of God in them, all their natural faculties are governed and corrupted, by an evil heart of unbelief. Hence it is morally impossible for God to love them, before they love him. As he clearly sees their corrupt hearts, he cannot but abhor their moral deformity. He is of purer eyes than to behold sin with complacence. He must cease to be perfectly holy, before he can exercise the love of complacence towards those who heartily oppose his own infinite purity and moral excellence. There is nothing that men can say or do, before they love God, which can render them lovely in his sight. But there is something in God, which renders him lovely and glorious, before he loves sinners; and therefore they can love him, before he loves them. There is a previous ground and reason for their loving him first; but there is no such previous ground and reason for his loving them first. The love of complacence towards sinners would be criminal; therefore it is as morally impossible for God to love them, be-

fore they love him, as it is for God to deny himself. But the love of complacence towards God is truly virtuous and holy; and as soon as sinners exercise this love, they become lovely, and must appear so in the sight of God. Were it possible in the nature of things, God would exercise complacence, as well as benevolence, towards sinners first. This appears from his exercising benevolence towards them, before they exercise benevolence towards him. He is infinitely good, and ready to do all that goodness can do for them; but perfect goodness forbids him to exercise the love of complacence towards them, while they remain dead in trespasses and sins.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God does not love sinners before they first love him, then it is a point of more importance, in preaching the gospel, to make them sensible that he hates them, than that he loves them. It is true that he loves them with the love of benevolence; but at the same time it is equally true that he does not love them with the love of complacence. He loves them, just as he loves the fallen angels and the spirits in prison, and no otherwise. But sinners are extremely apt to believe that since God loves them with the love of benevolence, and treats them kindly, he must also love them with the love of complacence. In this case, therefore, the most important point to be illustrated and inculcated is, that God hates sinners with perfect hatred, notwithstanding all his benevolence towards them. But here many, and, I had almost said, the greater part of ministers insinuate to sinners, that God loves them while they have not the least spark of love to him. And some really advance this doctrine in plain terms, and assert that they cannot love God first. This is contrary to the whole tenor of scripture, and calculated to lead sinners into a fatal delusion; and there is reason to fear that many have been finally ruined by it. It is, therefore, the great business of ministers, to teach sinners how vile and hateful they appear in the eyes of a holy and sin hating God. Our benevolent Saviour, who came to suffer and die for sinners, never gave the least intimation that God loved them with the love of complacence; but, on the other hand, addressed them as objects worthy of universal detestation and abhorrence. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John the Baptist preached to sinners in the same manner. "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers! who

hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" This mode of preaching is directly suited to convince sinners of their guilty and deplorable condition, and to prepare them cordially to embrace the gospel. There is nothing so alarming to stupid sinners as to be told that the great God is their enemy, that his wrath abides upon them, and will abide upon them, until they first love him. Accordingly the first and best preachers of the gospel, made it their main object to impress this awful truth upon the minds of sinners. The apostle Paul says, in the name of the rest, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." It is not the love, but wrath of God, that is best adapted to persuade sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

2. If God does not love sinners before they love him, then their first exercise of love to him must be before they know that he loves them. Many seem to think that sinners must have some evidence that God loves them, before they can put forth any exercises of love to him. But how is it possible that they should get any evidence that he loves them, before they love him? He does not love them, until they have first loved him. Their love to him must go before, and be the evidence of his love to them; for the only evidence they can have that he loves them, is a consciousness of their first loving him. His being worthy of their love does not depend upon his loving them; but their being worthy of his love depends upon their loving him. They may love him first, because he is really worthy to be loved, on account of his intrinsic excellence and glory; but he cannot love them first, because they are totally destitute of every holy and amiable quality. Whenever they begin to love God, they must necessarily know that he does not and cannot love them as they then are. It is certain, even to a demonstration, that when renewed sinners first turn their eyes to God, their hearts rise in supreme affection to him, before they do or can know that he loves them. His supreme excellence is the primary and sole ground of their supreme love to him, and not any supposed interest in his favor. For they are not in reality the objects of his complacence, and have no special interest in his pardoning mercy, until they have actually given him the supreme affection of their hearts.

3. If God does not love sinners before they love him, then they must love him, while they know that he hates them, and is disposed to punish them for ever. He is a sin hating, sin condemning, and sin punishing God; and all sinners, under genuine convictions, always view him in this light; yea, they realize that his wrath abides upon them, and that nothing but his abused patience prevents the immediate execution of his

justice. It is in this situation, and while they view God as looking upon them as perfectly odious and hell deserving creatures, that they first love him for his own intrinsic excellence; while they are totally ignorant whether he will save or destroy them. This is always the case, when convinced sinners are converted. Their conversion consists in a reconciliation to a holy, sovereign, sin revenging God. They love him for hating just such creatures as they are, and being disposed to give them a just recompense of reward for all their groundless enmity and opposition to him and his cause. The penitent malefactor who was crucified with Christ, first loved God, and became reconciled to his vindictive justice towards himself, while he expected nothing but to sink down to hell, in a very few moments. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed *justly;* for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This instance of a sound conversion demonstrates that every sinner, in order to be saved, must love a holy, sin hating, and sin revenging God, while he has no evidence of any interest in his special favor; but even while he looks up to him as ready to cast him off for ever. The awakened and convinced sinner hates God for his holiness, his justice, and his sovereignty; but before he can become an object of the divine complacence, he must love God for these very same perfections, which, for aught he knows, may be displayed in his everlasting destruction. And in the exercise of this true love to God, he must go to him for pardoning mercy, as the servants of Ben-hadad advised him to go to Ahab in his distress. "And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings; let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; *peradventure he will save thy life.*" When the sinner first loves God for what he is in himself, and asks for mercy, he cannot possibly know whether God will grant or deny his request; but without knowing this, he is willing that God should do his pleasure, and glorify himself by him, either as a vessel of mercy, or a vessel of wrath.

4. If sinners must love God before he loves them, then they are naturally as unwilling to embrace the gospel, as to obey the law. Many who hate the law, which requires true love to God

and man, pretend to like the gospel, which they imagine speaks a milder language. But this can be owing to nothing but a misapprehension of the true spirit of the gospel, which requires precisely the same pure and disinterested love, that the law requires. Both the law and the gospel require sinners to love a holy, just, sin hating, and sin condemning God, and that upon pain of eternal destruction. The gospel is not a mere declaration of pardoning mercy to sinners, without any condition to be performed on their part. The condition of the gospel is that faith in Christ which immediately flows from love to God the Father, who insists upon sinners returning to him, and submitting to his absolute sovereignty, before they know whether he intends to save or destroy them. And can there be any thing more disagreeable to their carnal hearts, in either the precept or penalty of the law, than such unreserved submission? The same selfish heart which hates the law, equally hates the gospel, when rightly understood. Christ did not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil. He did not come to save sinners in their native enmity and opposition to God, but to pardon them upon condition of their renouncing their groundless disaffection, and becoming cordially reconciled to his whole law and his whole character. It is impossible for sinners to approve of the gospel before they approve of the law, or to love the gospel before they love the law. It is a dangerous deception for any to think that they love and embrace the gospel, while they inwardly hate and complain of the rigor of the law, either in its precept or penalty. None but those who delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, really love the gospel, and stand entitled to the blessings of it.

5. If God love those who first love him, then he is willing to receive them into his favor upon the most gracious and condescending terms. This is the plain import of all his free and universal offers of mercy in his word. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Can we conceive that God could offer to pardon and save sinners upon lower or easier terms than these? They are the very same terms upon which a kind and indulgent parent would offer to forgive and receive a child who had disobeyed his commands, abused his favors, and left his house and family. So our Saviour more than intimates in the parable of the penitent

publican, and in that of the returning prodigal. As soon as the publican cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he went away pardoned and accepted; and as soon as the prodigal said in his heart, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants;" his father met him, embraced him, and forgave him all his faults. The father loved the prodigal as soon as the prodigal loved him; so God loves sinners, as soon as they love him. The father returned to the prodigal, as soon as the prodigal returned to him; so God will return to sinners, as soon as they return to him. This is loving, pardoning and accepting sinners upon the most gracious and condescending terms possible. It is impossible to conceive that God should be willing to save sinners, or that they should be willing to be saved, before they first love him, and become cordially reconciled to his amiable and glorious character. His offers of mercy to sinners are as low, as easy, and as condescending, as infinite grace can propose.

6. If God does not love sinners before they love him, then they have no right to desire, or pray, that he would become reconciled to them, while they continue to hate and oppose him. Though they always cast off fear and restrain prayer as long as they can, yet when they are awakened to realize their guilty and perishing state, they never fail to call upon God to become reconciled to them while their hearts rise in sensible opposition to him. But what right have they to pray in such an unholy and unreasonable manner? Who hath required this at their hands? Though God has required them to ask for his love and mercy, yet he has never required them to ask amiss. Nay, he has expressly told them that if they turn away their ear from hearing the law, even their prayer will be an abomination in his sight. And the reason of this is plain. They pray that he would become reconciled to them while they are unreconciled to him, and that he would love them while they are perfectly unholy and unlovely. God is of purer eyes than to behold sin. It is morally impossible that he should love it in any of his creatures. What right, then, can unholy, unlovely and impenitent sinners have, to pray that God would love them with complacence while they are devoid of every amiable quality, and in the exercise of perfect malevolence? They have no more right to do this, than they have to pray that God would change his nature, and become as unholy and sinful as themselves.

7. If God loves sinners as soon as they love him, then if they properly seek him, they shall certainly find him. This God expressly promises to all sincere seekers. "I love them

that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." If sinners will only follow these directions in seeking God, they not only may be, but *must* be saved. The benevolence of God disposes him, and the promise of God obliges him, to love those that love him, and to make them for ever happy. This is the only proper way of seeking God, and the only certain way of finding him. And it is impossible to point out any other way of seeking God, which is either proper or safe. There is no propriety nor safety in directing sinners to seek God in an unholy and impenitent manner; for if they follow this direction, they will certainly be lost. But if they will renounce their own righteousness, become reconciled to God, and penitently ask for mercy, he will hear their prayers, and grant them all the blessings which he has promised to them that love him.

Finally: If God loves those who love him, then it is not so difficult as some imagine, for them to determine whether they are personally the objects of the divine favor and stand entitled to eternal life. They have no occasion of prying into the secret counsels of God, in order to determine this most serious and important point. They have only to look into their own hearts, and see whether they themselves love God. If they are conscious of loving him sincerely and supremely, they have the witness within themselves, that he loves them, and will be their friend and portion for ever; because he has expressly said, "I love them that love me." Though we cannot know that our fellow men love us, merely by knowing that we love them, yet we can know that God loves us, merely by being conscious that we love him. If we love God as a Father, we may know that he loves us as children. Hence says the apostle to christians, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The spirit itself" (that is, the spirit of adoption) "beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Let every one, therefore, who entertains any doubt whether God be his friend, examine his own heart, and see whether he is the friend of God. If he finds in his heart a sincere and supreme affection to God, he may be assured that God loves him as a child, will treat him as a child, and make him an heir of eternal life.

SERMON XXXVI.

CHRIST WILL REJECT MERCENARY FOLLOWERS.

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.—John, vi. 26.

These words refer to Christ's feeding the five thousand, with only five barley loaves and two small fishes. This miracle convinced the multitude that he was the Messiah whom they had long expected to come, and deliver them from their national calamities. Under this impression, they formed a secret design to take him by force and make him king. But he perceived their thoughts, and defeated their purpose by departing into a mountain alone. When the evening came on, the disciples also left the multitude, and attempted to cross the sea of Tiberias, which, by means of a mighty wind, threatened to overwhelm them. But in the midst of their distress, they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and approaching the ship, which greatly surprised them at first; but as soon as he made himself known, they invited him on board, and were instantaneously conveyed to land. The next day, the multitude, whom he had miraculously fed, crossed the same sea in order to find him, and when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they were surprised, and said, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" Christ took no notice of this appearance of respect, but pointedly reproved them for their mercenary motives in following him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." These persons had no love to the character of Christ, but only to his benefits. He said they

loved him for the loaves; by which he meant, not merely the bread they had eaten, but all the favors which they had received, and which they expected to receive, from his beneficent hand. He saw the selfishness of all their friendly affections, and, for that reason alone, refused to acknowledge them as his sincere followers. The plain language of this instance of his conduct is,

That he will reject sinners, while they love him merely for his favors.

Here two things are to be illustrated.

I. That sinners may love Christ merely for his favors.

II. That he will reject them, while they love him from no higher motives.

I. Let us consider that sinners may love Christ merely for his favors. Though they are entirely destitute of grace, and see no beauty nor comeliness in the character of the Redeemer, yet they may love him for seeking and promoting their own personal good.

1. This appears from their conduct towards the Saviour in the days of his humanity. They manifested a great regard to him, while he went about doing good and dispensing his favors with peculiar liberality and compassion. They loved him for his miracles, for his public discourses, and for all the blessings which they expected he would bestow upon the nation in general. No man, perhaps, was ever more admired and beloved by the Jews, for a time, than Jesus of Nazareth. It is said in the history of his life, "The common people heard him gladly." It is said, "All the people came early in the morning to him in the temple for to hear him." It is said, "He taught daily in the temple," and, "all the people were very attentive to hear him." It is said, "Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." It is said, "There followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan." These were really great multitudes, for they consisted sometimes of three, or four, or five thousand people. The followers of Christ were so numerous, that it was extremely difficult to approach him. At one time Zaccheus, and at another time his mother and brethren, could not make their way to him by reason of the press. And all these multitudes followed him with peculiar ardor and zeal. "It came to pass that as the people *pressed upon him* to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennessaret." This fond attachment to Christ continued and increased until his last entrance into Jerusalem, just before his crucifixion. Then their affections for their long expected and long desired Messiah, kindled into a flame of enthusiasm, and brake forth into songs of joy and exultation. "A

great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way; and the multitudes that went before and that followed after, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." Such were the views and feelings of sinners in Zion, in regard to the divine Redeemer. They loved, admired and praised him for his favors. They felt and acted just as all other sinners would in a similar situation. For,

2. It is altogether agreeable to their selfish hearts, to love their benefactors. Our Lord laid it down as a universal truth, that "sinners love those who love them." It is their nature, to be lovers of their own selves, and to seek their own things. Hence, they as spontaneously love Christ for his benefits, as they love their own interest. They wish to be happy as long as they exist. And so far as they view Christ as disposed to promote either their temporal or eternal happiness, their selfish feelings are pleased and gratified. While he actually lived among them, some loved him for giving them food, some for giving them health, hearing and sight, and some for giving them hopes of happiness in a future state. In these days, sinners as naturally love him for his death, for his gospel, for his gracious invitations, and for every thing he has said, and done, and suffered, which they imagine bears a favorable aspect upon their spiritual and eternal interests. They are indeed no less disposed to love Christ for his favors, than to love themselves supremely. But

II. Christ will reject them, so long as they love him from no higher motives. It was his uniform practice to frown upon those who professed to love him, or proposed to follow him, from selfish views. We find several other instances, besides that in the text, of his rejecting such as he knew were attached to him from mercenary motives. When one came and said, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," he gave him this forbidding reply: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Another accosted him with equal zeal and presumption: "I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." This Christ considered as an expression of a selfish heart; for which he excluded him from his service. He said unto him, "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." And when the amiable young ruler

came to him and discovered his totally selfish heart, he sent him away sorrowful. His conduct in all these instances was exactly correspondent to his plain and repeated declarations upon this subject. He declared, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Yea he solemnly declared, that he would as final Judge at the last day, condemn even those who had done ever so many acts of kindness to their fellow men, without a supreme and ultimate regard to himself. Both his preaching and conduct put it beyond a doubt, that he will finally reject all, who never love nor serve him from any higher motives than his favors.

But here some may be ready to ask, Why will the gracious and compassionate Saviour exclude from his favor and kingdom all such as love him from no other than selfish considerations? The reasons are plain, and sufficient to carry conviction to every conscience.

1. It is because those who love him merely for his favors, are mortal enemies to his person. He knew Judas was his enemy, and would betray him, notwithstanding all his apparent expressions of love. And he saw the same disposition in others, who loved and followed him for his favors. The evangelist tells us, "When Christ was at Jerusalem at the Passover in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." It is related in the context, that Christ delivered a discourse which offended his mercenary disciples, and it is said, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." In the eighth chapter of this evangelist we read, "As he spake these words, many believed on him." But after he had more fully explained himself, we are told, "Then took they up stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself." When he was preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, the people "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." But as soon as they perceived that he had no partial affection for them in particular, they were filled with

wrath, and attempted with violence to destroy his life. Thus some who loved Christ merely for his favors, discovered their real disaffection to his true character on particular occasions. But finally they all threw off the mask, and exhibited their mortal enmity in the most open and astonishing manner. The same multitudes, who conducted him into Jerusalem with acclamations of joy and triumph, in a few days after, cried with equal zeal and ardor, Crucify him, crucify him! and at last, stood around his cross, exulting in his dying agonies. These facts demonstrate that those who love Christ from merely selfish motives, are his mortal enemies. They perfectly hate all his human and divine excellences, and would destroy him, if it were in the power of their feeble hands. This Christ knows, and for this he may justly exclude them from his blissful presence, and consign them to a state of everlasting alienation and despair.

2. Those who love Christ merely for his favors, are real enemies to all his sincere friends, who bear his image and imbibe his spirit. This is a necessary consequence of their hatred to Christ, which he forewarned his true disciples to expect. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." The spirit here predicted, was acted out as soon as the Christian church was formed in Jerusalem. The same men who followed Christ for the loaves, who hated his doctrines, and who procured his death on the cross, afterwards imbrued their hands in the blood of James and Stephen, and opposed all the true followers of the crucified Saviour. The same spirit still exists, in its full strength, in all who love Christ merely for his favors. They are heartily opposed to those who feel and act agreeably to his precepts and example. And though their present love to Christ for his supposed love to them, restrains their enmity to his friends, yet nothing is wanting but a proper view of their real condition, to draw forth the native malignity of their hearts. And since Christ knows they are real enemies to both himself and to those who love him in sincerity, he may righteously separate them from the society of the blessed, and appoint them their portion with the great accuser of the brethren.

3. Another reason why Christ should finally reject such as love him merely for his favors, is, because they are enemies to his whole work of redemption. He came into the world to save his people from their sins, and bring them into a perfectly holy and happy state. And in executing his gracious design, he will bring all the elect to a cordial reconciliation to God, to

himself, to one another, and to all holy beings in the universe. But those who love him merely for his favors, can have no portion or lot in this matter. They love themselves solely and supremely, and can never enjoy the holiness and happiness of others. The whole scheme of redemption and all the steps taken to accomplish it, will cross their views, wound their feelings, and destroy all their mercenary love to Christ, and to every other holy being. If such persons were permitted to enter the gates of heaven, they would feel a perfect contrariety of heart to all its objects, employments and enjoyments. There the law of love will be completely fulfilled. There purely disinterested affections will be universally and mutually displayed. And there the most sensible opposition to selfishness and all selfish creatures will be fully, freely and perpetually manifested. So that the last act of Christ, in completing the work of redemption, must be to fix all his real friends in those mansions he has prepared for them, and to banish all his and their enemies from his and their presence for ever.

It now remains to improve the subject, which is adapted to throw light upon pure, experimental religion.

1. If Christ condemns all those religious affections which flow from a selfish heart, then there appears to be one essential error prevailing in the Christian world. The number is large, among various denominations of christians, who maintain that none can or ought to love Christ, until they know or believe that he loves them in particular, and intends to give them eternal life. They say, in support of this sentiment, that the apostle tells us, "We love him because he hath first loved us." They suppose faith is before love, repentance, or any other gracious exercise. To this purpose they apply another text, which says, "faith worketh by love." That is, according to their construction, produces love. They hold that the first and great duty of a sinner is to make himself believe, "without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason," that Christ has died for him in particular, has pardoned his sins, and will finally conduct him to heaven. And this appropriating faith, they imagine, will produce true love, repentance, submission, joy, hope, and all the Christian graces. Thus their whole scheme of experimental religion is built upon the supposition that we ought to love Christ merely for his favors, and not for the intrinsic beauty and excellence of his moral and mediatorial character. This sentiment universally prevails among Antinomians. In some form or other, many Calvinists really believe it. Arminians equally deny disinterested benevolence, and suppose men never do nor can act from any higher principle than self love. And every scheme of Universalism is evidently founded in

selfishness. But this and all other selfish schemes of religion, are, according to the whole tenor of Christ's preaching, fundamentally false and fatal. He abundantly taught that no part of his religion consists in selfishness, and that no love to him which flows from that corrupt source, will ever meet his approbation. And the reason is plain to the meanest capacity. Selfishness is the essence of total depravity, and constitutes the carnal mind, which is enmity to God, to Christ, to his friends, and to all true holiness. It is, therefore, an essential and fatal error, to maintain and believe that we cannot and ought not to love God nor Christ until we are persuaded we have a saving interest in their love. Those who build their hopes of salvation upon this sandy foundation, will be fatally disappointed, unless they seasonably renounce their error, become reconciled to the true character of God, and esteem Christ, not merely for his favors, but for what he is in himself, as the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely.

2. If Christ will reject all those who love him merely for his favors, then there is great danger of men's deceiving themselves in regard to their spiritual state. They are naturally disposed to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, and to mistake the ground of their religious affections. If they love Christ merely for his favors, they are apt to conclude they love him sincerely, and shall meet his approbation at the last day. This is a fatal mistake, which thousands have made. The multitudes who loved Christ for the loaves, and followed him with joyful hopes, thus mistook the motives of their love, and imagined their selfish feelings were holy affections. The Israelites made the same mistake, who sang God's praise, but soon forgot his works. In times of the out-pouring of the Spirit and a general revival of religion, it is often the case that the awakened and convinced, by some means or other, obtain a hope of pardon and acceptance, which fills their selfish hearts with raptures of joy. Some hope they are forgiven, because a text of scripture comes suddenly and unexpectedly into their mind; some, because they happen to open to a certain passage in the Bible; some, because they imagine they hear a voice assuring them of their good estate; some, because they dream of seeing Christ in all his glory, and as manifesting peculiar love to them; some, because they hear the wonderful love of God and Christ towards sinners pathetically described; and some, because they apply to themselves the gracious promises made to true believers. In these and various other ways, men may deceive themselves with a false hope of a saving interest in Christ. The devil and a wicked heart concur to lead them into this fatal delusion, which is greatly strengthened and con-

firmed by those, who maintain and teach that they ought to love Christ merely for his favors, and cannot love him from any higher motives. Surrounded by such powerful temptations, from within and without, to mistake selfish love to Christ for true love, there is awful danger of multitudes' falling into this soul ruining deception. Yea, there is reason to fear that thousands and thousands of the professed followers of Christ, who appear zealous in his cause, are mistaking their selfish love and zeal for true religion, and deceiving themselves with raised hopes and expectations of entering into the kingdom of glory, which will be finally and awfully blasted.

3. Since Christ has so fully condemned all religious affections which flow from selfish motives, there is no necessity of men's deceiving themselves in regard to their spiritual state. The distinction which he has made between false religion and true, is plain and intelligible to all, who are willing to know their own hearts. All men know what it is to love or hate from selfish considerations, and are able to distinguish between loving Christ for his favors, and loving him for his true character, or divine beauty and excellence. Those who loved him here on earth for his favors, knew the motives of their love. Some knew that they loved him merely for affording them food. Some knew they loved him merely for restoring their sight. Some knew they loved him merely for enabling them to hear and speak. Some knew they loved him merely for raising them from sickness, weakness and lameness, to health, strength and activity. And some knew they loved him merely for coming, as they supposed, to save their nation from the calamities which they had long endured from the power and oppression of their enemies. These were all selfish motives for loving Christ, which those who felt them and acted from them, might have certainly known and distinguished from that pure, disinterested love, which he so plainly taught and inculcated. It was entirely their own fault, if they mistook their selfish, mercenary love to Christ for a truly holy and pious affection. He gave them no occasion to deceive themselves upon this interesting point, but favored them with abundant means of knowing their character and condition. The same is true of all who now enjoy the gospel, which contains the marks he has given of true and false religion. Every man may know, if he loves Christ merely for his favors, that he has no true religion. And, on the other hand, every man may know, if he loves Christ for his divine excellence and glory, that he is a real christian. No man, under the light of the gospel, can entertain a false hope of salvation, unless he chooses to deceive himself. Of this there is great danger, but no necessity. Men are however, extremely

apt to hold themselves in doubt, and to plead in excuse, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" This is a perversion of the words of the prophet, who does not mean to say, that men cannot know their own hearts, but only the hearts of others. There is an essential difference between selfishness, in every form and degree of it, and that disinterested charity which seeketh not her own, and is the bond of perfection. This difference every man is capable of distinguishing, by only attending to the real motives of his love or hatred towards God, or towards Christ, or towards himself and fellow creatures. Peter knew how to distinguish his true love from every false affection towards his divine Master. When he forsook and denied him, he knew he felt and acted wrong; but when he repented and returned to him, he knew his love was pure and disinterested. This enabled him to answer promptly the trying question which Christ put to him. "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" He replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." He would not say, as he once did too presumptuously, that he loved Christ more than the other disciples; but he would say what he knew to be true, that he loved him sincerely. If any who are the true friends of Christ are ignorant of their true character and happy state, it is because they deceive themselves. And if any imagine they are real christians, whilst they are under the entire dominion of a selfish heart, it is because they choose to live in quiet under a fatal delusion. Let all hearken to the solemn exhortation of the apostle upon this deeply and universally interesting subject. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, — how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."

4. If sinners love Christ merely for his favors, then nothing can induce them to love him for any thing else. No motives of temporal or spiritual good have the least tendency to alter the nature of their love, but only to increase it. This was clearly manifested by their conduct towards Christ whilst he dwelt amongst them. When he fed them, or healed them, or relieved them from any natural evil, they loved him for doing them good, but not for his own divine excellence and glory. And when he offered them all the blessings of his kingdom, if they would give up their own interests for his and the gospel's, they would not accept the gracious proposal. He assured the rich young man, if he would sell all that he had, and come and follow him, he should have treasure in heaven; but he rejected the offer, and went away sorrowful. He promised sinners in general, if they would renounce their houses, or lands, or friends,

for his sake, they should have an hundred fold more good in the present time, and in the world to come eternal life. But these great and alluring motives, which he exhibited before them, had no influence to change their hearts, or to induce them to love him and his cause supremely. Many preachers of the gospel seem to imagine that the hard selfish hearts of sinners may be melted into true love and contrition, by displaying before them the beauties of holiness, the loveliness of Christ, and the joys of heaven; but though these motives may awaken their selfish love, and gratitude, and penitence, yet they will not excite a spark of holy love, or joy, or godly sorrow. There is nothing in God, nor Christ, nor heaven, that sinners will love more than themselves. They lie beyond the reach of all objective light, or external motives. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, without making any saving impressions upon their hearts. Though their love and joy may be raised ever so high by mercenary motives, still their hearts will remain totally selfish and impenitent. This is the very character which the prophet ascribes to the sinner. "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness."

5. If sinners love Christ merely for his favors, then it is easy to discover the only thing which lies in the way of their salvation. They often complain of their inability to embrace the offers of mercy, and think it very hard to be required to accept the terms of life, upon pain of eternal destruction. They say they wish, they desire, and earnestly strive to enter into the kingdom of God, but find themselves unable. This is true. But why are they unable? what difficulty lies in their way of accepting the terms of salvation? Are they not as low and condescending as possible? Christ says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "And whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Again they are told, "all things are ready." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." What can hinder sinners from accepting these kind and gracious invitations? Can they not desire, and love, and choose other objects? Can they not even love Christ himself for his favors? What is the difficulty then? This subject clearly shows them what it is. It is nothing but their total selfishness. They love themselves supremely, which, as long as it continues, utterly prevents their loving Christ, or the gospel, or any other object, with a truly holy or benevolent affection. Self love can never rise above self; and so long as this love possesses the hearts of sinners, it is morally impossible for them to love Christ sincerely and come to him for a holy

salvation. Hence Christ plainly tells them, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." While sinners love selfishness, they cannot love benevolence. While they love sin, they cannot love holiness. While they love Christ for his favors, they cannot love him for his truly holy and amiable character. But there is no difficulty in their turning about, and exercising benevolence instead of selfishness. They are altogether as capable of exercising supreme affection to Christ, as to themselves. Their impotency is moral, and lies wholly in their free, voluntary exercises. Upon this ground, God commands them to love him with all the heart, and to make them a new heart and new spirit. Upon this ground, he not only commands, but expostulates with them. "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" "Are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" And upon this ground, he threatens to destroy them. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." "Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." This sentence is so perfectly just, that when it is executed, every impenitent sinner's mouth must be stopped, and every holy being must say, "Let him be anathema, maran-atha." Let him perish for ever.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD.

— Who is blessed for ever. — Romans, i. 25.

As Paul was the great apostle of the Gentiles, so he was better qualified than any other of the apostles, to instruct the Gentiles in the great and essential doctrines of the gospel. And as he had not had an opportunity of preaching to the church at Rome, which was principally composed of those who were converted from heathenism to Christianity, he wrote this epistle to them, in order to give them a more clear, extensive and systematic knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, which they had professed to embrace. This is the apology he makes for writing to them. "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto, that I might have some fruit among you also even as among other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." But, as he did not know that he ever should be permitted to go to Rome, he determined to write this letter to the christians there for their spiritual instruction and edification. Accordingly, he first teaches them the knowledge of the only living and true God, in contrast with the gross ignorance and idolatry of the heathen world, who were inexcusable for not acknowledging and glorifying their great Creator. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. Because that when

they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." He goes on to describe the corruption and idolatry of these heathens, until he says, "They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." Though the phrase, blessed God, be very commonly used, yet it seems to be very rarely understood. It is proposed, therefore, in this discourse,

I. To describe the blessedness of God; and,

II. To show that he is perfectly blessed.

I. I am to describe the blessedness of God.

To bless is to make happy, and to be blessed is to be happy. But though it be easy to define the term blessed, when applied to the Deity, yet it is not so easy to form clear and just conceptions of the blessedness or happiness of a being, who is all mind, or a pure, immaterial spirit. "God is a Spirit," who is neither material, nor connected with any thing material, as our spirits are. This obliges us to conceive of the divine felicity as purely intellectual. The blessedness of God wholly consists in mental views, exercises and emotions. And this leads us to inquire what those mental views, exercises and emotions are, which conspire to produce his essential blessedness. And here I would observe,

1. He is necessarily happy in his benevolent feelings. God is love. He possesses not only the natural perfections of intelligence, wisdom and power, but also the moral attribute of universal benevolence. His benevolent heart is as large as his infinite understanding, which comprehends the knowledge of himself and of all intelligent and unintelligent creatures. He has a full and adequate view of all his own great and amiable excellences and perfections, which affords him the highest self approbation. He knows the infinite worth and importance of his own infinite existence, and he exercises both benevolence and complacence towards himself, according to his supreme greatness and goodness. And he has the same constant and comprehensive view of all other beings besides himself, and he feels perfectly benevolent towards the immense number of individuals who compose the whole family of his creatures in heaven and earth, and all parts of his vast dominions. In a word, his benevolence is as extensive as the universe, and has a kindly influence over all that are capable of enjoying the least degree of happiness. Now we all know that benevolence of any kind always gives pleasure to the mind. There is a selfish benevolence, which is a happy feeling so long as it continues. There is also a pure, disinterested and universal benev-

olence, which yields a purer, higher, and more lasting satisfaction to the mind. And such is the benevolence of the Deity. His benevolent feelings, therefore, towards himself and all his various and numerous creatures, must be a source of pure and permanent felicity.

2. God is necessarily happy in expressing his benevolent feelings. This is something different from the simple feelings of benevolence. There are immanent emotions of benevolence, which are not productive of any external act. Good men have a thousand benevolent affections which they never did and never could express by any external actions. The benevolent feelings of the Deity which we have mentioned under the first particular, were chiefly of this kind. He is also both able and disposed to express his benevolence in acts of kindness and beneficence, according to his unlimited and unerring wisdom. He diffuses as much happiness among his creatures as his almighty power, guided by his unsearchable wisdom, can produce. He is incessantly exerting his almighty power in upholding and preserving both angels and men, and satisfying the desires of the many millions of his dependent creatures. And all these expressions of his goodness are extremely gratifying to his benevolent heart. He makes himself happy by making his creatures happy. Christ took great pleasure in going about to do good and to promote the temporal and eternal happiness of mankind. But God takes far more pleasure in the innumerable expressions of his goodness towards all creatures in heaven and earth. Do parents feel peculiar satisfaction in expressing their love to their children? So does the kind parent of the universe in expressing his goodness and grace to his rational offspring. Hence says our Saviour, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The prophet Micah represents God as delighting in the expressions of his pardoning mercy. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of his heritage, because he delighteth in mercy." And God himself gives the same representation of the pleasure he enjoys in the expressions of his benevolence. "I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Much of God's blessedness results from the great and innumerable expressions of his goodness. All his acts are benevolent in the works of creation, providence and grace, and all conspire to make him truly blessed. Besides,

3. God is necessarily happy in beholding the effects of his

benevolence. As he loves to promote the happiness of his creatures, so he loves to see the happiness which he bestows and they enjoy. As all his works flow from benevolence, and tend to diffuse happiness among intelligent and percipient beings, so all the effects of his power are no less effects of his love. Of course he enjoys real felicity in beholding all the works of his hand and effects of his goodness. Agreeably to this we are told that when he had finished the work of creation, he "saw every thing that he made, and behold it was very good." It perfectly pleased him and gratified his benevolent feelings. He continually beholds all his creatures, and all his works, and sees all the happiness which exists in the whole circle of creation. He sees all the joy and felicity which fills the minds of saints and angels in heaven, and all the happiness which is enjoyed in this lower world. As heaven and earth are full of his goodness, so they are full of objects which entirely please and gratify his benevolent heart. Thus in feeling and expressing his pure benevolence, and in contemplating the fruits and effects of it through the whole universe, God is truly blessed. The whole of his felicity results from, or consists in these benevolent views and feelings. Nor can we conceive that a pure and perfect Spirit should derive the least degree of happiness from any other source. His natural perfections, without his moral, could yield him no pleasure or satisfaction. His power, knowledge and wisdom, though infinitely great, could only enable him to do and see all things, without enjoying any thing. For the bare view of objects, without any exercises of heart, can afford neither pleasure nor pain to a percipient being. Happiness is seated in the heart, and not in any mere intellectual faculties. This is true of beings that are composed of flesh and spirit, and much more of him who is a pure, uncreated mind. If this great, original and external Spirit be truly happy, his happiness must exist in his heart. And if it exist in his heart, it must flow from his pure, benevolent feelings; for no other kind of feelings can afford real happiness to any intelligent, moral being. Were the Deity a pure Intelligence, as many heathen philosophers and Christian divines have supposed, it would be impossible, in the nature of things, that he should be truly blessed. But if he possesses true benevolence, he must enjoy self approbation, which is real happiness. I now proceed to show,

II. That he is perfectly and for ever blessed. This will appear from various considerations.

1. The blessedness of the Deity is without the least alloy, or mixture. It is as pure as his perfect benevolence, from which it flows. God is love, and in him is no malevolence at all.

Though the benevolence of saints in this life affords them some real happiness, yet it is mixed with many painful feelings, which arise from the mixture of their selfish with their benevolent affections. Their selfishness opposes their benevolence, and obstructs the happiness which they would otherwise enjoy. But there is no such contrariety of feelings in the divine Being. His goodness is without alloy, his love without defect, and his benevolence without malevolence. All the affections of his heart are uniform and harmonious. Though his affections are infinitely strong, yet his mind is perfectly serene. There is no perturbation in his feelings; and though they are as various as the immense variety of creatures and objects in the universe, yet, as they are all of the same benevolent nature, he never feels the least conflict or discord in his own mind. If his benevolent feelings, therefore, yield him the least degree of happiness, they must necessarily give him pure, perfect and permanent felicity.

2. The blessedness of the Deity must be not only unmixed, but uninterrupted. There are many things which serve to interrupt the happiness of saints here in this imperfect state, besides their discordant feelings. But there is nothing in the universe to interrupt the pure and unmixed felicity of the divine Being. He never slumbers, nor sleeps, nor falls into a state of insensibility a single moment. He is never obliged to turn his attention from one object to another, as all his intelligent creatures are. They cannot view two worlds, nor even two distant objects in the same world, at once. But God can behold all things done in heaven, and earth, and all parts of the universe, at one and the same time. He can feel and express his benevolence, and see all the effects of it among all his creatures, without a moment's interruption, or intermission. He never finds any difficulty or obstacle in the way of extending his benevolent regards to any of his creatures, who are always in his sight and his reach. He never sees a good to be done, which is out of his power to do. He never sees an evil to be removed from his creatures, which it is out of his power to remove. And he never meets with any resistance from any other being, which he cannot with infinite ease surmount. There is indeed nothing within himself nor without himself, which can, in a single instance, or for a single moment, interrupt the most free and perfect exercise of his benevolence. It necessarily follows that his happiness which flows from his benevolence, is constant, uninterrupted and permanent. His perfect love is a fountain from which perpetual streams of happiness must constantly flow, and fill his vast, unmeasurable mind. Any interruption in the divine blessedness would be a great imperfection

in it; but there can be no imperfection in the nature, or happiness of the Deity. He so absolutely fills and governs the universe, that he can never be disappointed, or obstructed in the gratification of his perfect benevolence, which constitutes his felicity.

3. The blessedness of God must be unlimited, as well as unmixed and uninterrupted. The happiness of some created beings is unmixed and uninterrupted, but never can be unlimited. Their finite natures will for ever set bounds to their enjoyments. Their felicity must necessarily fall short of perfection. But the blessedness of the Deity can admit of no limitation. It is as great as possible. This is evident from the great scheme or mode of operation which God formed from eternity. Among all possible modes of operation which stood present to his omniscient eye, his infinite wisdom chose the best, to give the most free, full, extensive expressions of his perfectly benevolent feelings. Among all possible things to be done, he determined to do all those which would diffuse the greatest sum of happiness through the universe. He determined to make as many worlds, and to place as many creatures in them, and to give those creatures as great capacities for enjoying good, as would be necessary to form a system which should contain the highest possible happiness. In short, he meant to display his infinite wisdom and almighty power, to give the benevolence of his heart the largest possible field of operation. And by forming this scheme of operation, which would give the most unlimited indulgence to his benevolent feelings, he laid a foundation for his own unlimited felicity and self enjoyment. For he is so absolutely able to fulfil his purposes, that he views them all as absolutely certain of accomplishment. Of consequence, he enjoys his whole benevolent scheme before it is consummated and brought to a close. If infinite wisdom could have conceived of any creature, or of any object, or of any event, which does not belong to that eternal scheme of operation which God has adopted, he would certainly have taken that creature, or that object, or that event into his original design of displaying his benevolence to the greatest advantage. We may justly conclude, therefore, that God has devised and adopted the best possible method to act out the perfect benevolence of his heart, and to promote his own highest possible blessedness. This leads me to observe,

4. That his blessedness is as perfect in duration as in degree. The apostle says in the text, He is blessed for ever. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." He can never see any reason to alter his designs, and therefore it is certain that he never will alter them. He can never meet with any insurmountable diffi-

culties in carrying his designs into effect, and therefore he will infallibly accomplish them. And if he does eventually accomplish all his purposes, his joy will be full, and his blessedness complete and eternal. He was blessed in forming his benevolent designs; he has been blessed in carrying them on; he will be blessed in bringing them to a close; and he will be blessed in contemplating them, through interminable ages. His blessedness will certainly be as great at the end, as at the beginning of the world. Nor does it imply any absurdity, to suppose that it will be much greater. At the end of the world, all the fruits and effects of his infinite benevolence will rise into view, and actually appear as realities in all their variety, excellence, magnitude and importance. We must suppose that God views things as they are, and not as they are not. He views things which do not exist, as not existing; and things which do exist, as actually existing. He now views the end of the world and the consummation of all his designs, as things future and not come into existence. But when they have come into existence, he will view them as present, and actually existing. Where, then, is the absurdity of supposing that the happiness of the Deity will rise higher when his great and benevolent scheme is accomplished, than it ever was before? And where is the absurdity of supposing that his blessedness should perpetually rise higher and higher, as the successive scenes of eternity are perpetually opening, and displaying new effects of his benevolence? It is certain that the felicity of saints and angels will perpetually and eternally increase, as they perpetually discover new and glorious effects of the divine benevolence in the works of creation, providence and redemption. And why should not the divine felicity increase, as God perpetually and eternally sees the growing holiness and happiness of all his holy creatures; which are new effects of his infinite benevolence? This does not imply that the divine blessedness has not been, and will not be, as great as possible, in any moment of infinite duration. But whether his blessedness will for ever increase or not, yet there is a foundation, in his nature and designs, for being supremely and infinitely blessed for ever and ever.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the blessedness of God essentially consists in the benevolence of his heart, then we may clearly understand what is meant by his acting for his own glory. The scripture represents him as making this his supreme object in all his conduct. We read that "the Lord hath made all things for himself" — that "of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be

glory for ever." God himself often declares in his word, I will do this and that, for my name's sake — for my praise — for my glory. These expressions are all of the same import, and signify that God always acts with an ultimate and supreme regard to his own glory. The question now is — What is to be understood by his glory? It is often said that his acting for his own glory consists in displaying his perfections before the eyes of his intelligent creatures. It is true, indeed, that when he acts for his own glory, he does display his perfections before the eyes of his intelligent creatures; but this is only an end subordinate to his supreme end, which is his own glory, or the most perfect gratification of his infinitely benevolent heart. If the display of his perfections did not gratify his own benevolent feelings, which are the source of his blessedness, they would not promote his own glory. It has often been asked — What motive could God, who is perfectly happy, have, to create the heavens and the earth, and give existence to angels and men? To say he created all things to display his perfections, does not appear to answer the question; for it may still be asked — Why should a perfectly happy being desire to display his perfections? But if what has been said in this discourse be true — that the happiness or blessedness of God consists in gratifying his benevolent feelings, then it is plain that this must have been his motive in all his works of creation, providence and redemption. He supremely and ultimately aimed to promote his own benevolent blessedness, in every thing he ever has done, or ever will do. As God saw from eternity all the holiness and happiness which it was in his power to produce, by creating such a system as he has created, his perfectly benevolent heart moved him to create it; and he could not have been perfectly blessed, if he had not created it. His creating the universe for his glory, means his creating it for his own most benevolent and perfect blessedness.

2. If God's blessedness, which consists in the gratification of his benevolence, be his glory, which he seeks in all his works, then his glory and the good of the universe cannot be separated. Men are very apt to separate them, and to imagine that God's acting for his own glory prevents his acting for the good of his creatures. But this is not true. His acting for his glory is acting to express his pure benevolence to his creatures, in promoting their highest happiness. It is impossible that God should promote his own glory to the highest degree, without promoting the highest good of the universe. Every benevolent being places his happiness in the happiness of others, as well as in his own happiness. David and Jonathan were both benevolent, and loved one another as their own souls; and, consequently, they placed their own happiness in the happiness

of each other. Pious parents and pious children are mutually attached to each other; and place their own happiness in promoting the happiness of one another. So the kind Parent of the universe places his happiness in the happiness of his immensely numerous offspring; and it would diminish his blessedness, if he saw a single individual among his creatures, that was less happy than he could consistently make him. As Creator, he stands in the same relation to all his creatures, and regards the good of the lowest as well as the highest among them, according to its intrinsic worth and importance. But he has let us know that he cannot make all his creatures happy consistently with the highest good of the whole, nor some so happy as others. Nevertheless it would wound his benevolent heart, if one human person were not as happy as he could consistently make him. It is impossible that God should seek his own glory, without seeking to make his creatures as happy as his perfect wisdom, goodness and power can make them. His glory and their happiness are, therefore, inseparably connected. He knows infinitely better than creatures do, what is most for his glory and for their good; and he means to promote his own glory, that he may promote their greatest good. He will be happy in seeing them happy; and they will be happy in seeing him happy.

3. If God means to gratify his own benevolence in all his conduct, then we may be assured that he never has suffered, and never will suffer any thing to take place in the universe, but what he knows will promote the greatest good of the whole system of moral beings. As this is the supreme object he has in view in all his works, he will cause every thing to take place which will serve to promote his supreme purpose, and prevent every thing from taking place that would either obstruct, or not promote, his ultimate end in creation. Since he has caused both natural and moral evils to exist among his other works of creation, we may be sure that no more natural or moral evil shall exist, than he sees necessary to promote his benevolent purposes. As he designs that the wrath of man shall praise him, so the remainder of wrath he will restrain, or not cause to exist. As he designs that the punishment of his sinful creatures shall promote the holiness and happiness of the heavenly world, so he will not make a greater number miserable, nor in a greater degree, nor in a longer duration, than the accomplishment of his supreme benevolent design requires. He will not suffer any thing to exist in any part of his vast dominions, which will not only gratify his own benevolent heart, but every benevolent heart in the universe. "We know, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called

according to his purpose." And the heavenly hosts say to God, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created." God's original and eternal design in creation was to please himself and his holy creatures. He will not, therefore, suffer any creature, object or event to exist, which will not, all things considered, actually please and gratify the hearts of all holy beings. This appears not only from particular passages of scripture, but from God's supreme and ultimate end in creation. It is not a wild and visionary sentiment, as many represent it to be, that every natural and moral evil is the occasion of great good. It is a doctrine founded in the essential attributes of the divine nature; and as certain as the existence of the divine Being.

4. If it be God's supreme design to make himself and his creatures as happy as possible, then we have reason to rejoice that he is absolutely sovereign. If any of his selfish creatures could guide, or stay his hand, they would not suffer him to seek his own happiness, nor the greatest happiness of the universe, but constrain him to promote their own private, personal, selfish happiness. Or if his benevolent creatures could direct or control his conduct, they would prevent his governing the world in the manner he does actually govern it; for they do not discover the wisdom of his providence in ten thousand important instances; and consequently, if they were to direct his conduct, he would order things very differently. But he is infinitely above all his creatures; and his ways are above their ways, and his thoughts above their thoughts. He always knows what is best, can do what is best, and will do what is best, notwithstanding the short sighted views, or selfish desires of any of his creatures. And they all have reason to rejoice in his absolute sovereignty. Christ rejoiced in it. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." All the inhabitants of the earth have reason to rejoice that the Lord reigneth as an absolute sovereign; and all the inhabitants of heaven do rejoice in his supremacy. The apostle John, speaking of what he saw and heard in heaven, says, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." It is just matter of rejoicing to the whole intelligent creation, that God always acts as a sovereign, without the least control from any other being in the universe. His own blessedness, and the highest felicity of all his holy creatures, entirely

depends upon his being and acting as a sovereign. For by acting in a sovereign and irresistible manner, he will infallibly overrule all things for his own glory; which will necessarily secure the highest good of all his benevolent and dutiful servants.

5. Since God places his highest happiness in promoting the highest happiness of his creatures, we have solid ground to believe that he will fulfil all his great and precious promises to believers. He has inseparably connected their happiness with his own. If he will certainly seek his own blessedness, he will as certainly seek theirs; and if he is able to make himself most perfectly blessed, he is as able to make all those whom he has set apart for himself, completely blessed. He has made as rich and large promises of good to his people as he can make. He has promised that all things shall work together for good to them that love him; and that all things are theirs; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs. All the promises which God has made to his people, are founded in his pure and perfect benevolence, and can no more fail than his benevolence can fail. And his love to his creatures can no more fail than his love to himself, because it is pure disinterested love, which regards their good as his own. The same perfectly benevolent spirit which moves him to seek his own blessedness, equally moves him to seek the blessedness of those whom he has renewed and sanctified. As he has begun a good work in them, he will irresistibly carry it on until it is completed. Though they may meet with a thousand difficulties, embarrassments, discouragements and fiery trials, in their Christian course, yet these will no more prevent their receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, than they will prevent God's obtaining his supreme and ultimate end, even his own supreme and everlasting blessedness. For the very same things which will promote his glory, will equally promote their final felicity. Hence Christ said to his followers, just before he left them to go to heaven, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

6. If God places his own blessedness in promoting the highest good of the universe, then there is the same solid ground to believe that he will fulfil his threatenings to the wicked, as there is to believe that he will fulfil his promises to the righteous. For the only reason why he determined to save a part and not the whole of mankind, was, because he saw that by saving only a part he could promote the greatest good of the universe, and most clearly act out the benevolence of his heart. His decree of reprobation originated in the same benevolence in

which his decree of election originated. So that there is the same reason to believe that he will carry into effect his decree of reprobation, as there is that he will carry into effect his decree of election. His own blessedness, and the good of the universe, both necessarily require him to execute his decree of reprobation, as well as his decree of election. God's threatenings to the finally wicked stand upon the same immovable foundation that his promises to the finally righteous do. They both stand upon the perfect, immutable benevolence of God. The argument, the principal argument, therefore, which is usually employed to prove that God will not fulfil his threatenings to the wicked, demonstratively proves that he will. The argument is taken from his infinite benevolence. It is said that God is too good to make any of his creatures, even his most sinful ones, for ever miserable. But it was owing to his benevolence to himself and to the universe, that he decreed to save a part and not the whole of the human race; and the same benevolence will infallibly move him to execute this decree. There is precisely the same reason to believe that God will fulfil his threatenings, as that he will fulfil his promises; and the same reason to believe both, that there is to believe that he is perfectly benevolent and infinitely blessed.

7. We learn from what has been said, that none can be miserable, in time or eternity, but those who are unwilling that God should promote the highest good of the universe. Those who are desirous that God should do this, must be completely gratified and blessed, when they shall see this glorious and benevolent design accomplished. But those who are unwilling that God should bring about this happy event, must of necessity be completely disappointed and wretched. And do not those who are hostile to the highest good of the universe, deserve the disapprobation and condemnation of all holy and benevolent beings? Do they not deserve the tokens of God's displeasure, and of the displeasure of all the heavenly world? But who are they that are unwilling God should promote the highest good of the universe? They are certainly such as are unwilling that God should glorify himself, by punishing the finally impenitent and incorrigible. And are there not many such in this world, who would rather God should not be glorified in promoting the highest blessedness of himself, and the highest happiness of the universe, than that he should make either themselves or others miserable for ever? All unrenewed sinners possess such selfish feelings, and desire that God would make them happy, though it should diminish his own blessedness, and obstruct the highest good of the universe. And they bitterly complain of God, if he will not gratify their selfish feel-

ings. But it is morally impossible for him to gratify their selfish and sinful desires. He must pursue and accomplish his benevolent purposes, though it sinks them in endless perdition. But this they might escape, if they would only renounce their unreasonable and selfish desires, and exercise pure and disinterested benevolence, which is their indispensable duty. God's ways are equal; he regards the good of the whole, more than the good of individuals; but their ways are unequal; for they regard the good of individuals more than the good of the whole. It would be infinitely wrong for God to renounce his benevolent object, and pursue their selfish object. But it would be perfectly wise and right in them to renounce their object, and pursue his. Therefore "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Finally: Let all the friends of God appear on his side, in this murmuring, repining, unbelieving, rebellious world, who hate him and oppose him without a cause. Let them go on their way rejoicing, while others murmur and complain. Let them unite with God in carrying on his designs, while others attempt to counteract and oppose them. Let them love and promote truth, while others run into errors and fatal delusions. They have the greatest encouragement to do this; for God is on their side, and employing all his perfections for their good. He is promoting the most benevolent design, which he will infallibly accomplish. By its accomplishment, he will raise the holiness and happiness of the universe to the highest possible perfection, which shall continue for ever and ever. And in the highest holiness and happiness of the universe, God will perfectly gratify his infinite benevolence, and enjoy infinite and everlasting blessedness. Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE FINAL HARVEST.

The harvest is the end of the world. — Matthew, xiii. 39.

After Christ had spoken and explained the parable of the sower, "he put forth another parable saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." This parable Christ spake to the multitude, in the hearing of his disciples, who, when Jesus had sent the multitude away, and went into the house, "came unto him saying, declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that sowed the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world; the Son of man

shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who that hath ears to hear, let him hear." By this parable Christ gives us a lively and striking representation of the last day. "The harvest is the end of the world." The time of harvest, is the time when men reap the fruits of their long and painful labors. So the end of the world is the time when God will reap the fruits, not only of his own labors, but of the labors of all whom he employs in his vineyard. The text in this connection plainly teaches us,

That God will have a harvest at the end of the world.

I shall endeavor to make it appear, in the first place, that God will have a harvest, and in the second place, that this harvest will be at the end of the world.

I. God is the wisest, the most powerful, and most active being in the universe. He always proposes some wise and important end in all he does. No wise man will cultivate and sow his field, without a design of reaping a valuable crop. Who then can suppose that God will be incessantly sowing, without any design of reaping? He had a wise design in creating the world, and he is constantly exerting his almighty power in accomplishing his primary and important design. He employs his powerful influence every moment in preserving and governing the world, in causing the regular succession of day and night, of winter and summer, of seed time and harvest, and in bringing about every event that takes place in any part of his vast dominions. And can we entertain the thought that he will exert his omnipotence for thousands of years, without obtaining his object, and enjoying the fruits of his labors? The ultimate end of all labor is rest and enjoyment. Men labor in one season, in order to enjoy rest in another. God intends that all his great and laborious exertions shall terminate in eternal rest and enjoyment. Though his plan of operation be immensely great in duration, as well as extent, yet it must be completely accomplished. Though his seed time may continue many thousand years, yet it is inseparably connected with the harvest. To suppose that he should be eternally creating new worlds, or new modifying old ones, would be to suppose that he has no perfect, consistent and ultimate end in view. And to suppose this, would destroy all the wisdom of his operations. His ultimate end, therefore, in the creation of this world, must be completely accomplished; and the accomplishment of it must put a final period to all his operations, and to the operations of

all his creatures here below. There must be a cessation of labor and a time of rest, in the moral world. God must have a time to reap as well as to sow, a time to enjoy as well as to labor. It is just as certain that he will have a harvest, as that he now has a seed time.

I proceed to show,

II. That God's harvest will be at the end of the world. It will be more than three months, more than three years, and it may be more than three thousand years, before his harvest will come. His field is the world. His laborers are now sowing, and preparing the way for the great harvest; but it will not come till the end of the world. For neither the wheat, nor the tares in the field, will come to maturity before that important period. But then all rational and accountable creatures will appear in the perfection of their natures and characters, and be fully ripe for a final separation. And when the wheat and the tares, or the righteous and the wicked, shall be separated and fixed in their final and unalterable state, then God will rest from his labors, and reap the happy fruits of all his works of creation, providence and redemption. This is that glorious consummation, which will take place at the end of the world. But in order to a more clear and full illustration of this interesting subject, I will enter into particulars, and observe,

1. That God will, at the end of the world, reap the rich and glorious fruits of his own labors. He has been laboring, in a certain sense, from the early days of eternity. Before the foundation of the world, he formed the best possible plan of operation, and determined all things that should ever take place, by his own operations, and by the operations of all his creatures. Though he formed this great, complicated and comprehensive design with perfect ease, yet it required the highest possible effort of his all knowing, all wise, and all benevolent mind. It requires considerable mental exertion in a man of large property, to form a wise and correct plan of his own conduct, and of the conduct of all whom he employs in his service; and it requires still greater mental exertion in a general of a numerous army, to form a wise and complicated plan of his own conduct, and of the various operations and movements of all under his command. But it required an infinitely greater exertion of the Deity, to determine in his own mind how many worlds he would make, how many creatures he would form, and how he would dispose of them all through every period of their existence. Having made these astonishing mental exertions in adjusting the whole plan of creation, he began to labor with his own hand. By his omnipotent hand, he brought heaven and earth, angels and men, out of nothing into being; and by

the same hand, he constantly upholds and governs all his creatures, and his works. He universally controls all the views, and designs, and conduct of angels and men, and employs them all as laborers in his vineyard, and as instruments in his hand, of executing his original and eternal purposes. Thus God, speaking after the manner of men, has been laboring, in devising the plan of creation, in performing the work of creation, and in superintending both the natural and moral world, from the beginning to this day; and he will continue his constant and laborious operations till the end of time. Then, his harvest being fully ripe, he will gather it in, and reap the fruit of all his labors from the beginning to the end of the world. His harvest will not be blasted nor injured by any unforeseen or unexpected accident, but be a complete compensation for all his laborious exertions, and a complete fulfilment of his benevolent desires and designs.

2. At the end of the world, God will reap the fruits of all the labors of his holy creatures. These are his faithful and industrious servants. All the holy angels are his ministering spirits, and continually engaged in his service. They guarded the tree of life. By them, he conveyed his messages to the patriarchs and prophets in former ages. And he still employs them to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, both while they live and when they die. He employed the ministry of angels, in giving the law at Mount Sinai. He employed the instrumentality of angels in destroying Sodom, and spreading destruction in the camp of the Assyrians. He sent angels to announce the birth of Christ. He sent an angel to strengthen Christ in his agony in the garden. He sent angels to watch the sepulchre of Christ, and to confirm the truth of his resurrection and ascension to heaven. And there is reason to think that he continues to employ a vast many angels to carry on the purposes of his providence and grace. With all these powerful and faithful laborers in his service, all good men always have been, and always will be united, while they remain on the earth. All the real friends of God, in every age and in every part of the world, have freely and faithfully labored in his vineyard. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and all the patriarchs, spent their long lives in serving God and their generations. Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, Samuel and the prophets, were no less faithful and zealous in doing the work that God gave them to do. If to these eminent servants of God, we add the apostles and primitive christians, and all the good men that have ever lived from the beginning of the world to this day, and all that ever shall live from this day to the end of time, the laborers in the

Lord's vineyard will appear immensely numerous. Solomon employed no less than one hundred and fifty thousand laborers every day, for seven years together, while he was building the temple in Jerusalem; but what is this number of laborers, in comparison with the many millions of laborers that God has employed, and will employ, in the course of seven thousand years, in finishing his living temple, which he is here erecting, and determines to bring to absolute perfection? We cannot, at present, form any adequate conception of the great, and glorious, and everlasting effects of so many faithful laborers for so many thousand years. But we know that God will reap all the fruits of all the labors, and sufferings, and prayers of all who shall be renewed and sanctified, and redeemed from among men at the last day.

3. At the end of the world, God will reap the fruit of all his unholy, undutiful and mercenary servants. Though God made all his rational and immortal creatures for himself, and formed them capable of yielding him a free, voluntary and faithful service; yet a large number of them have renounced their allegiance to their rightful Lord and Sovereign, become disaffected to his character, opposed to his wise and holy designs, and resolved to pursue their own selfish interests in direct contrariety to his. Apostate angels and apostate men are alienated from God, and heartily opposed to his cause and interest in the world; and would not, if they could avoid it, do any thing to promote the designs he is pursuing, and is determined to accomplish. But God is able to overrule all the enmity and opposition of fallen angels and of fallen men, in subserviency to his own glory, and the great interests of his kingdom. This he has most clearly and strikingly manifested in the course of his providence, from the beginning of the world to the present day. He has always had the hearts of all his enemies in his hand, and made them undesignedly willing to promote the very ends they hated. God designed to promote his own glory in the fall and recovery of mankind. And he employed Satan, his first and greatest enemy, as a free, voluntary instrument to promote that design, which he had no desire nor intention to promote. And after the apostacy of the human race, we find that God employed evil spirits, as free, voluntary agents in fulfilling the purposes of providence. He undoubtedly employed their invisible influence in bringing about the dispersion of the ambitious and idolatrous builders of Babel; in sending Joseph into Egypt; in trying the patience of Job; in hardening the heart of Pharaoh, and the hearts of the Egyptians; in hardening the hearts of the seven nations of Canaan, and preparing them for their predestinated ruin; and in tempt-

ing Saul, Ahab, Haman and Judas, to pursue the path to their own destruction. God saw it necessary to bring all these things to pass, and employed the free and voluntary agency of his most inveterate enemies to effect his purpose. There is reason to believe that God has as constantly and universally employed the unholy as the holy angels, in carrying on his gracious designs in this fallen world. And he as constantly and universally employs unholy as holy men in laboring for him in his vineyard. He has hitherto employed a vast many more sinners than saints in his service. It appears from both sacred and profane history, that God employed the Egyptians, Syrians, Babylonians, Grecians and Romans, to labor for him, in preparing the way for the coming of Christ, and the spread of the gospel among those who were perishing for the lack of vision. And he is now setting the whole wicked world in motion, and employing their selfish exertions to promote his benevolent and gracious designs. And though the labors of his mercenary servants never have been, and never will be virtuous, yet they always have been, and will be unspeakably useful, in promoting his ultimate end in the creation of the world. And when he has accomplished this wise and noble end, he will then reap a rich harvest from their long, laborious and undesigned services. I must add,

4. That God will, at the last day, reap the fruits of all the labors of the Lord Jesus Christ. He came into the world to do the will of him that sent him, and he delighted to do his will. He was the most faithful and laborious servant that God ever employed in his service. He went into his Father's vineyard, and went about his Father's business, before he was twelve years old; and he never lost nor misimproved a single moment of time for more than twenty years. And though his life was comparatively short, yet he did more in that short period than any other person ever did in more than nine hundred and sixty years; and was far the most faithful, most industrious and most laborious servant that ever voluntarily entered into his Father's field. He knew all that he had to do and to suffer for his Father, beforehand. He knew that he had to combat the power and subtlety of Satan in the wilderness. He knew that he had to work miracles, to cure all manner of diseases, to cast out devils, to go all over Judea and preach the gospel of the kingdom, to lay open the corruption of the human heart, to condemn the errors, delusions and false religion of the apparently best and worst of men, to meet their contradictions, reproaches and malignant opposition, to endure the heat of summer and the cold of winter, and to save himself and others from sinking into the sea of Tiberias. But these

labors, dangers and sufferings, were nothing in comparison to what he knew that he had to endure in the garden, before the bar of Pilate, and on the cross, by the hands of wicked men. Though he fully anticipated these things, and sensibly realized the tremendous sufferings before him, yet he did not shrink from them, but magnanimously and cheerfully resolved to meet them. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." And when the time was come that he should finish the work that his Father had given him to do, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, to make his soul an offering for sin; where he was derided, insulted, and with wicked hands crucified and slain. The painful and faithful labors of Christ were unspeakably greater and more important than all the labors of angels and men put together. Indeed, their labors would have been of little account, if not entirely lost, had it not been for the labors of Christ. He has done, and will do more than any other person in the universe, to bring home many sons unto glory, and to augment the holiness and happiness of heaven for ever. When he shall have finished his mediatorial work, he will exhibit the fruits of his labors before the eyes of the whole intelligent creation, and fill every holy heart with inexpressible joy. Thus, at the end of the world, God will reap the fruit of his own labors, the fruit of Christ's labors, and the fruit of the labors of all his holy and unholy creatures; and these fruits will yield him a most glorious and plentiful harvest, and lay a broad and permanent foundation for the everlasting rest and enjoyment of all holy beings.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If, at the end of the world, God will reap the fruits of his own labors, and of the labors of all his intelligent creatures, then he will have a very rich and plentiful harvest of every thing the most valuable and desirable.

For, in the first place, he will have a rich and plentiful harvest of knowledge. None of his intelligent creatures will come to their proper maturity in knowledge until the end of the world, when God's ultimate end in the creation of it shall be completely answered and universally known. Though angels have been growing in knowledge from the day of their creation to this day, and will continue growing in knowledge from this day to the great and last day, yet they will not come to their full growth, until they have seen all intelligent creatures collected together, and all their views, and feelings, and exer-

tions completely unfolded, together with all God's dispensations of providence and grace towards them. Though they have been looking into God's works and ways for nearly six thousand years, with great attention, and though they have made great and rapid improvements in knowledge during this long period, yet they may learn ten fold more in one thousand years to come, than they ever learned before; and yet not arrive at their full growth, or proper perfection in knowledge, until the end of the world and the final consummation of all things. This is also equally true of the whole human race. Though they come into the world extremely ignorant, yet they naturally grow in knowledge as they grow in years; but though some of them have lived hundreds of years in this world, and thousands of years in another, yet none of them ever have, or ever will, come to the full measure of perfect men in knowledge, till the end of the world. Then the intellectual powers and faculties of all minds, whether human or angelic, will come to maturity, though not to equality. Angels will continue a superior, and men an inferior, order of beings; and one angel will be superior to another angel, as well as one man superior to another man, in knowledge. But this variety in knowledge will be consistent with absolute perfection in each individual. Now, if at the end of the world the many myriads of angels and the many millions of the human race, will all be collected together in one vast assembly, and exhibit all the improvements in knowledge they have ever made under all the means of divine cultivation which they have ever enjoyed, God will certainly reap a rich and plentiful harvest of knowledge, which will afford him unspeakably more joy than any harvest ever afforded the richest man in this world. Every child of Adam will know more than Adam, or Enoch, or Moses, or Solomon knew when they left the world; and all the angels will know vastly more, than they ever knew before God's ultimate design in creation was accomplished and revealed.

God will reap a rich harvest of holiness, as well as of knowledge. All the angels of heaven, and all that shall have been redeemed from among men, will shine forth in the kingdom of their Father, in all the beauties of holiness. The patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, all that had been sanctified and justified, will appear but a little lower than the angels of heaven, in their gracious and divine attainments. And these attainments will appear far more valuable and excellent in the sight of God, than all their intellectual improvements. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. God views holiness in himself and in his rational creatures, as infinitely more amiable and valuable than any other excellence or perfection. And the immense fruits of holi-

ness, which the immense number of his laborers in his vineyard shall have brought forth in the course of many thousand years, will vastly increase the value and joy of his rich harvest at the end of the world.

Farthermore: His harvest will then comprise, not only all the knowledge and all the holiness, but all the happiness of all his holy creatures. All his faithful servants will then cease from their labors, and enter into everlasting rest and enjoyment. They will enjoy that blessed kingdom which had been prepared for them by all the laborers of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and of the whole intelligent creation. And God will then see all his holy creatures brought to the perfection of their natures, placed in their proper mansions, and in the full enjoyment of all good. A more rich and plentiful harvest than this, we cannot conceive it possible for God to enjoy at the end of the world and final consummation of all things.

2. If God will reap such a rich and plentiful harvest of knowledge, holiness and happiness, at the end of the world, then he deserves our everlasting gratitude and praise for his goodness in creating it. Nothing but mere goodness could have possibly moved him to form the great and benevolent design of creation. He was under no natural necessity to create the heavens, or the earth, nor any intelligent creatures in them. He was self-sufficient for his own blessedness. He might have enjoyed everlasting rest in the contemplation of his own glorious perfections. And he must have known before hand, that if he should create the heavens and the earth, and fill them with rational creatures, how much care and labor it must cost him and them, to accomplish the great, and complicated, and arduous design. But in the full view of all this, his benevolent heart moved him to create the world, and to exert all his perfections in upholding and governing it, until he had brought millions and millions of rational and immortal beings to the highest perfection in knowledge, holiness and happiness. As this state of perfection will be the result of the work of creation, so we may safely conclude that this was his ultimate end in bringing all things into existence. And we cannot conceive that he should have formed a greater, wiser, or better end, in the creation of the world. He will always have occasion to rejoice in all his works, and so will all his holy creatures. He will not be indebted to them for any of their labors, but they will always be indebted to him for all the good that his labors and theirs will finally produce. For they will fully and for ever enjoy his rich and happy harvest at the end of the world. They cannot look backward to the beginning of the world, nor forward to the end of it, without seeing their indispensable obligations to thank and praise him for

creating goodness. And if we felt as the heavenly inhabitants feel, we should joyfully join with them in saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

3. If God will have a vastly rich and plentiful harvest at the end of the world, then we have no reason to expect that he ever will have more than one harvest. At the end of the world, God will have created the heavens and the earth just as he originally intended to create them; he will have preserved and governed them, just as he intended to preserve and govern them; he will have brought as many intelligent creatures into existence, as he intended to bring into existence; he will have brought them to that state of perfection in knowledge, holiness and happiness, to which he intended to bring them; and he will have completely answered his original and ultimate end in the work of creation. And this will be the largest and richest harvest, that he could possibly propose, desire, or produce. We cannot conceive, therefore, that, after he has actually reaped this great and valuable harvest, he should desire to produce and reap another. The very supposition would argue imperfection. It would imply that he was not able to form the greatest, wisest, and best end in the creation of the world, at first. It is as absurd to suppose that God will have more than one harvest, as to suppose that he will have a thousand, or two thousand, or a million harvests. When God formed his original and eternal design of creation, he formed as great, as wise, and as good a design, as his boundless wisdom and goodness could devise, and his almighty power could accomplish. And unless, after the end of the world, he should increase in power, wisdom and goodness, it will be both naturally and morally impossible that he should devise or accomplish any new design in the work of creation. I know that some have supposed that God will not gather in all his harvest at the end of the world. They suppose that after he has separated the wheat from the tares, or after he has separated the righteous from the wicked, and cast the wicked into a lake of fire, he will there ripen, and purify, and prepare them for the kingdom of heaven, and be reaping a rich harvest from the regions of sin and sorrow, for ages and ages, after the end of this world. And indeed some have supposed that he will continue to destroy old worlds and create new ones, through the endless ages of eternity. But these suppositions are plainly contrary to the natural and moral perfections of the Deity, and to his own declarations concerning the end of the world, and the complete accomplishment of his original design in the creation of it.

4. If God shall have such a rich and plentiful harvest at the

end of the world, then all his faithful laborers have a bright and glorious prospect before them. Though they are now really wheat, and the excellent of the earth, yet they are in a green and imperfect state, and can scarcely be distinguished by themselves and others from the tares in the field. But all intelligent beings are constantly laboring to ripen them for the harvest, and bring them to maturity and perfection in knowledge, holiness and happiness. Though they are now the sons of God, yet it doth not yet appear what they shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, they shall be like him in every natural and moral excellence, and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They will rejoice to find themselves, and so many myriads of rational and immortal creatures brought to a state of perfection, and completely prepared for everlasting rest and enjoyment. But, above all, they will rejoice that God had perfectly obtained his supreme and ultimate end in the creation of the world, by his rich and plentiful harvest. For his harvest will be their harvest, and they shall enjoy the fruits of all his and their own labors, so far as they shall be capable of enjoying them. Thus light is continually sowing for the righteous, and gladness of heart for the upright. Though the harvest they are preparing will not be ripe until the end of the world, yet let them not be weary in well doing; for in due season they shall reap, if they faint not. Success in any business is the most animating motive to activity. It was the prospect which Moses had of the recompense of reward, that animated him to labor so long and so faithfully for God. It was the prospect of success in bringing home many sons unto glory, that induced Christ to endure the pains and reproaches of the cross. And the apostle urges christians to the greatest activity in the service of God, from the same motive of success. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

5. If God always has been, from the beginning of the world, carrying on his original design of producing a rich and plentiful harvest at the end of it, then none can cordially approve of any part of his conduct, without approving of the whole. Many, however, imagine, that they approve of many things he has done, who say they do not approve of his eternal purpose, nor of innumerable instances of his conduct in the dispensations of his providence and grace. But none can really and heartily approve of any one thing he has done, in creating, preserving, governing and redeeming the world, who do not approve of his ultimate design in the creation of the

world, and of every thing he has done, and employed others to do, to produce a rich and plentiful harvest at the end of it. His design is uniform and consistent, and, in its very nature and operation, deeply affects all his intelligent creatures, who either approve, or disapprove of it. Some approve of it, and desire and endeavor to promote it; and some disapprove of it, and desire and endeavor to prevent its accomplishment. None are neuters. Every one is on the Lord's side, or against him; every one gathers with him or scatters abroad. All in the invisible world, are openly for him or against him; and all in this world are really, though not visibly, for him or against him. And it is because mankind are not so well acquainted with God's ultimate end in creation as the good and evil angels are, that they do not as openly appear and act for him, and against him. Did all men now only know and realize that design which God formed in eternity, and which he has been pursuing, and will finally accomplish at the end of the world, there would not be a doubting christian, nor a doubting sinner on the face of the earth. When the tares and the wheat are ripe for the harvest, there will be no difficulty in distinguishing them one from another; so, when saints and sinners are ripe for God's harvest at the end of the world, there will not be a doubting saint or sinner. And it is in the view of God's harvest, that both saints and sinners can now best discover whether they are really for him or against him. Let them then only consider what he has plainly told them concerning his harvest at the end of the world, and what a separation he will make between the tares and the wheat, the sheep and the goats, and his faithful and unfaithful servants; and they can scarcely doubt whether God's harvest will be a day of the greatest joy, or of the deepest sorrow to them.

6. This subject calls upon you all to inquire, for what, and for whom, you have been laboring. There is no doubt but you have generally been industrious and laborious about something; but for what have you been laboring? Have you been laboring for the meat that perisheth, or for that which endureth unto eternal life? Have you been laboring to lay up treasures in heaven, or to lay up goods for many years, and to become great, and rich, and happy, in this present life only? Have you been laboring for God, or for yourselves? Have you been seeking his interest, or your own? Have you been workers together with him, or with his enemies? It is easy to answer these questions in the view of this subject. If you have approved of God's ultimate end in the creation, preservation, government and redemption of the world, which he has been pursuing, and which he will certainly accomplish at the end

of it; and if you have been laboring to prepare yourselves and others for a state of perfection in knowledge, holiness and happiness, you have been laboring for God; if not, you have been idle and worse than idle all your days. God says of Israel, he "is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself." "Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts," to those who bring forth fruit unto themselves, "Consider your ways; ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." It seriously concerns all to consider their ways, whether they have been laboring for God and laying up treasure in heaven; or whether they have been laboring for themselves, and are exposed to suffer an everlasting and irreparable loss.

Finally: If any are conscious to themselves that they have never been laboring for God, let them immediately devote themselves to his service. He has determined to carry into execution his eternal and ultimate end in the creation of the world, and to prepare all things for a rich and plentiful harvest. He has been laboring, his Son has been laboring, his Spirit has been laboring, his angels have been laboring, and multitudes of mankind have been laboring, for several thousand years, to bring millions and millions of rational and immortal creatures to the highest perfection in knowledge, holiness and happiness; and yet there remains a vast deal to be done, in order to bring about this most important and desirable event. And we have reason to think that God will still employ human as well as other subordinate agents, in preparing things for his rich harvest at the end of the world. Here then let me observe, that it will not interrupt any of your lawful business to enter into God's vineyard and labor for him. It will make all your labors more pleasant, more prosperous, and unspeakably more useful. It will entitle you to as large a portion of the knowledge, holiness and happiness of heaven, as you can desire, or possibly enjoy. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for he shall eat the fruit of his doings." "And he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." But if you continue to neglect to serve God, he will bring his harvest to maturity, gather in his wheat, and separate the tares to unquenchable fire. "There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." "Who hath ears to hear let him hear."

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